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INCLUDES CORKER! FREE PULL OUT ALL AGES COMIC

NEW STORIES START INSIDE

COMIC SCENE

Your Complete Guide to Comics

NEW & RETRO COMICS

ROK OF THE REDS

CAPTAIN COSMIC

WHY WE LOVE DREDD

ISSN 2517-6447

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Welcome to ComicScene Issue Ten.
If you are new to the magazine then a big warm welcome to you all.

From this issue we not only have our regular features on great comics old and new but we mix it up a bit with some comic strips too! The return of Captain Cosmic (see his first adventure in issue 5 of ComicScene) and Lady Flintlock (Dick Turpin meets Gentleman Jack - serialised in issues 5 to 8) is great news for all readers. Even better news is the launch of Rok of the Reds by Judge Dredd co creator John Wagner, Alan Grant and Dan Cornwell. Football - and aliens! A great combination!

Also this issue, as promised last month, a brand spanking new pull out all ages comic for you to enjoy. Aimed at 7 to 14 year olds, but hours of enjoyment for all ages, is 'Corker!' We've brought together some great strips that you can read and then share with your kids, nieces, nephews, grand kids or in a public space such as a library, community centre, school, doctors, dentists, hairdressers, play centre. Kids love comics - they just have to get their hands on a copy and you can help. Let them enjoy Gallant and Amos, Megatomic Battle Rabbit, Slash Moron and Whackoman! as much as we do and let their imagination go wild! You will be helping create the next generation of comic readers and comic creators.

Big thanks to John Charles for our original Judge Dredd cover and Marc Jackson for our Corker! cover this month. Lovely work!

If you have a blast then please do subscribe. You can get ComicScene and all your favourite UK and US comics at our website getmycomics.com/comicscene

Our next issue is out 19th December...
See you then! Yours aye, Tony.

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Managing Editor: Tony Foster
Contact ComicScene UK
www.comicscene.org
comicsceneuk@gmail.com

Design: The Burgh
The Burgh Communications Ltd
www.theburgh.org
davedignan@theburgh.org

Cover art: John Charles
Contact: johncharlesart@yahoo.com
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Instagram.com/comicsflix
comicsflix@gmail.com

ADVERTISING & SUBSCRIPTIONS
comicsceneuk@gmail.com
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CHILDREN'S COMICS AND COMIC SHOPS...

WHY THE COMIC SHOPS ARE FAILING

Or the **Raina (& Pilkey) Test** - how to tell if your comic shop **wants to make money...**

Over many years in comics, I've been heavily involved with kids' comics, whether as someone trying to sell them at Nostalgia & Comics (now Worlds Apart), Birmingham, as a parent trying to find great comics for my daughter, as a librarian in a primary school trying to put together the best graphic novel library, and now as a comics critic. Because I believe it's the key to the long-term survival of both the medium and the commercial viability of comic shops.

Over the years, I've seen a wonderful increase in visibility of kids' graphic novels and comics, to the point where it's almost universally acknowledge that the kids and young adult market is the fastest growing part of comics. Yes, you can point to the increasing mainstream awareness of superheroes thanks to the exponential success of the Marvel movies (and to a lesser degree DC movies,) but the figures for comics, and most pertinently graphic novel sales, tell us that it's definitely not superheroes that are driving graphic novel sales.

Sadly though, that simple fact seems to have passed by your average comic shop owner. And it's that simple fact more than anything else that will be the driving force that sees more and more comic shops go under. They have no one to blame but themselves, all the evidence is there, the facts are staring them in their faces. But, again and again they just ignore a kids market that gets bigger and bigger and bigger every year.

Please, don't get me wrong, I love comic shops, I adore them. Hell, I spent 19 years, boy and man, working in Nostalgia & Comics, Birmingham. I want comic shops to thrive, I want more and more wonderful comic shops to open and stay open. But in my travels I've seen so many make the absolutely negligent mistake of ignoring kids' comics, and in doing so, ignoring perhaps the most important and only growth demographic in comic reading.

And there's a very simple test of whether a comic shop is smart enough to survive - Does it pass the Raina Test?

It's as simple as that. She's the best-selling comic maker in the Western world alongside Dav Pilkey of Dog Man fame. And if your comic shop doesn't have even one book by the pair of them, then that comic shop doesn't care about kids, doesn't care about stocking kids' comics and, incredibly, doesn't really care all that much about making money.

Allow me to explain. I've even got stats to back up my ideas in the form of the annual Bookscan data. Ok, I'll admit that those aren't perfect… they're the figures reported from any participating bookstore. But that's US bookstores and doesn't include comic shops, where the direct sale model is completely different to bookstores. It also tends to blur the line of what we count as a comic, with books like Wimpy Kid and Dork Diaries featuring in their graphic novel lists. But, even with all those problems, it still gives us graphic novel sales figures that we can use as a starting point for a discussion. Although frankly the discussion should go like this… "You aren't stocking these books? What the hell comic shop owner, don't you want to make money?"

Because, even on the most cursory glance, looking at the Bookscan charts for the last

three years, 2016-2018, it's glaringly obvious that kids and young adults graphic novels make up the lion's share of the top 10 each and every year.

In 2016, for example, young adult/kids titles made up nine of the top 10 graphic novels, or seven if you take out Dork Diaries 10 and The Adventures of Max Crumbly. The only graphic novel for adults? The Killing Joke by Moore and Bolland, coming in at number 8.

Take a look closer though and you'll see the amazing thing. All seven best-selling graphic novels in 2016 have just one common feature – they're all by Raina Telgemeier. Four she wrote and drew (Ghosts, Smile, Sisters, and Drama) and the other three were her adaptations of the Baby-Sitter's Club from the works of Ann Martin. In all, Telgemeier accounted for roughly 5% of ALL the 2016 income from graphic novels. FIVE PERCENT.

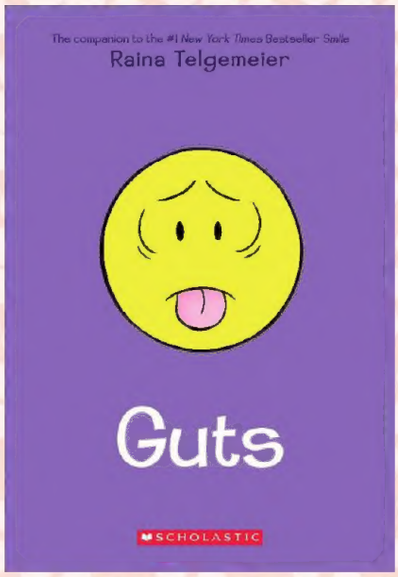
2017, it gets better - the entire top 10 is kids and young adults GNs. In fact, you have to get to 23 before finding an adult graphic novel (Persepolis) and 36 before anything superhero (Killing Joke again). And the chart belongs to two names; Dav Pilkey (his Dog Man books at 1-3) and Raina Telgemeier (Ghosts, Drama, Smile, Sisters, and a Babysitters Club adaptation at 4-8). Whether numbers 9 & 10, Rachel Renee Russell's The Misadventures of Max Crumbly 2 and Dork Diaries 1, are comics is something to debate another time. But the books in positions 1-8 are absolutely comics... and they're by TWO people.

2018, Dav Pilkey just strengthens his hold on the top ten, with the top six spots going to his Dog Man titles - which is something like 13% of ALL the graphic novels sold through Bookscan. And then Raina is there with Drama, Smile, and Sisters in the top ten. Rounding it out, we have Gale Galligan's Baby Sitters Club adaptation. First superhero title? That would be The Infinity Gauntlet at 29, obviously pushed up by the Avengers movie.

You really want to tell me that superheroes are going to save comics?

Nope, afraid not. But Raina Telgemeier and Dav Pilkey might.

Figures for 2019 are obviously not out yet, but it's a safe bet that Raina & Dav Pilkey will be topping the charts this year. After all, Raina's new book, Guts, is a massive bestseller already. In the first week of release in September, it sold 76,000+ copies, making it not just the number one



GN, but the number one best-selling book, eclipsing the second placed book, Stephen King's The Institute, with just shy of 50,000 copies. Remember, this is in a comics market where the best-selling graphic novels in comic shops across the world sell maybe 200,000 a year.

How quickly do you think Guts is going to blow through the 1 million copy first print run? Pilkey's new Dog Man book did something similar, having sold nearly 600,000 copies in the 6 weeks of its release and it's going to blow through its 3 million print run in no short time as well.

The success of young adult graphic novels isn't going away anytime soon. And isn't it wonderful that, in a world where we're increasingly told that children don't read as much, here's evidence they do. They absolutely devour the books.

My own experience, at the coalface if you will, was when I was setting up a library in a primary school here in the UK. I made sure I had a wide range of graphic novels in there, classics such as Asterix and Tintin, modern classics such as Bone, the Phoenix Presents graphic novel series, all of Telgemeier's works, and yes, plenty of superheroes of all types.

It didn't take long to realise that the kids just weren't borrowing superheroes. They knew of them sure, but that was through the movies, not the comics. But they were borrowing everything else in the graphic novel section of the library. In fact the top fifty borrowed items in the library broke down roughly half and half graphic novels and novels. Proving to me, at least with this small sample size, that kids want to read comics, as long as they're the right sort of comics. And by that I mean the Raina Telgemeier and Dav Pilkey sort of comics, alongside things as diverse as Amulet, Bone, Tintin, Asterix, Simpsons, Babymouse, Gum Girl, Adventure Time, Raymond Briggs, Beano Annuals, and so much more. But the top two borrowed comic authors would always be Raina Telgemeier and Dav Pilkey, even though back then Pilkey's books weren't pure comics.

So, given all that information, the Bookscan details and my own anecdotal evidence about what the kids are reading, it's quite obvious that the market for kids and comics is defined by those two authors, Raina Telgemeier and Dav Pilkey. Yet, when you walk into any comic shop and head for the kids section, I can pretty much guarantee that you'll be lucky to find any of their books. Which, of course, is insane. Given the number of copies they sell, it's ridiculous to think that comic shop owners wouldn't want a cut of that action.

In fact, you could almost accuse comic shops that don't stock a wide range of kids comics, including the Raina and Pilkey books as being economically negligent and just plain insane.

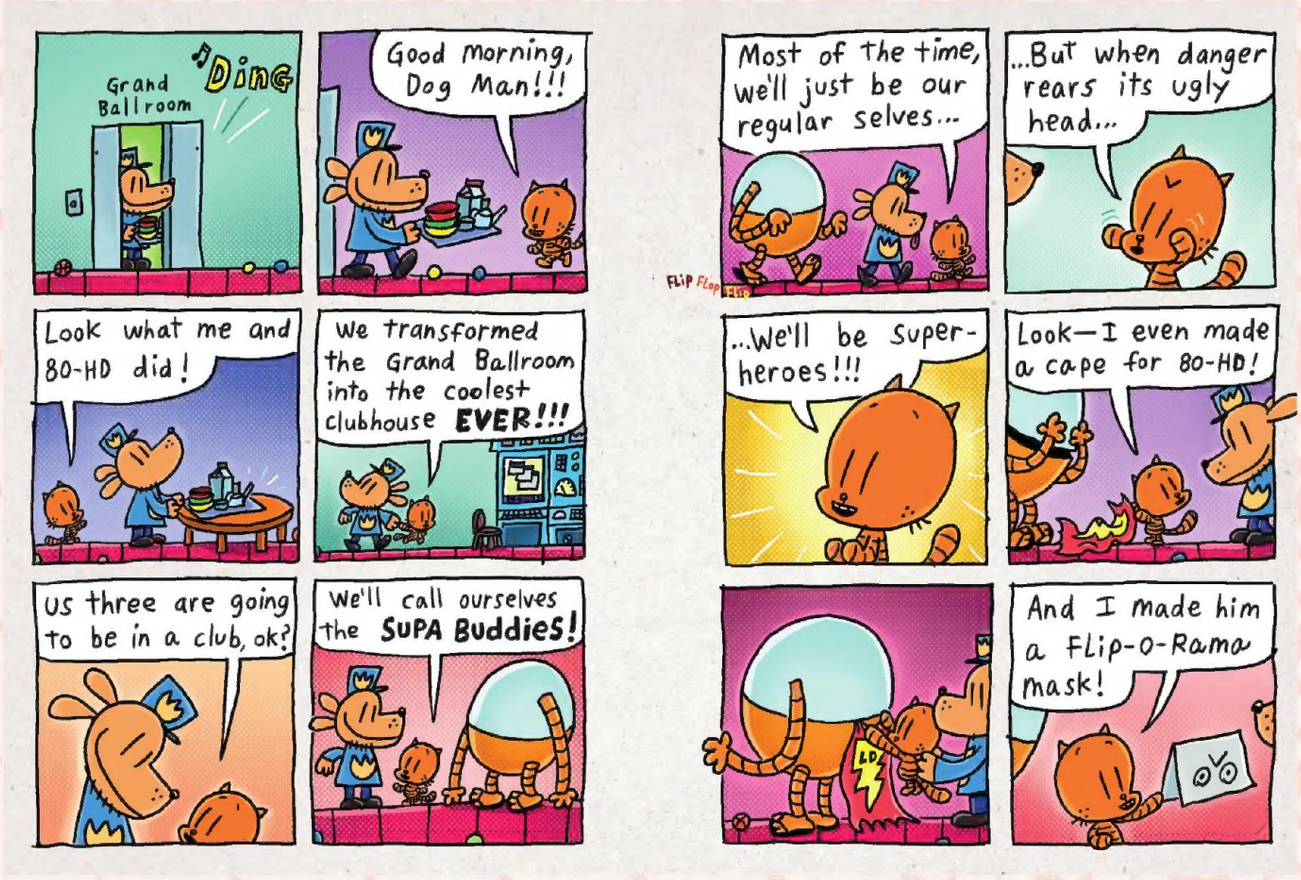
Now, before everyone throws their arms up and tells me that they know great comic shops where the children's section is incredible, I know there are great shops out there. But my experience of comic shops across the UK tells me that those great shops that recognise the proven goldmine of YA and kids GNs are few and far between.

Far more likely, if you walk into your local comic shop, you'll struggle to find the kids section. If the shop has one, it's a couple of shelves, a rack at best, out of the way, and loaded with the comic shop's idea of what kids want to read. Kids lines from Marvel and DC, maybe My Little Pony, that sort of thing.

Given all the facts - If you run a comic shop and you don't have a single Raina Telgemeier or Dav Pilkey comic book on your kids racks, what the hell are thinking? Don't you like making money?

The reasons for kids sections in comic shops being so poor are many. It's a historical thing, given the time that comic shops first came into being and flourished, where comics really weren't for kids anymore. Comic shops were traditionally set up to sell superhero comics. And that idea still persists. Persists to the point where comic shop owners and managers just ignore or worse, don't even realise that there's a new kids comic market out there that they should be stocking.

But increasingly, comic shops are now just pandering to an ageing customer base.


Grand Ballroom
Ding
Good morning, Dog Man!!!
Most of the time, we'll just be our regular selves...
...But when danger rears its ugly head...
Look what me and 80-HD did!
We transformed the Grand Ballroom into the coolest clubhouse EVER!!!
...We'll be super-heroes!!!
Look—I even made a cape for 80-HD!
Us three are going to be in a club, ok?
We'll call ourselves the SUPA Buddies!
And I made him a Flip-o-Rama mask!

And they seem, insanely, happy to keep doing that, selling the same old thing to their ever older customer base. Follow that dumb-ass business strategy to its end and you have comic shops dying out alongside their every shrinking customer base.

Meanwhile, all of these kids who love comics will carry on getting them from anywhere than comic shops. It might be bookshops, Scholastic book fairs, online, libraries, but it sure aint the majority of comic shops.

Comic store owners and managers – why don't you try? It really doesn't take much. Change your displays, change your layout. Have kid friendly posters and window displays, put the allages section front and centre, stock it with the books that you know are proven sellers. It's not going to change overnight sure, it's going to take years to really get things going, but once they do, for every copy of Watchmen or The Walking Dead these forward thinking shops sell, they'll be selling ten Raina Telgemeier and Dav Pilkey books. And as those Raina and Pilkey readers grow older, they'll be your future customers, teens and adults.

All it takes is the courage to make the change, and the simple ability to read the figures.

So what are you waiting for, comic shop owners? Two authors, Raina Telgemeier, Dav Pilkey. Go and order their books, make a big deal of it, work hard and get those kids in your store. Create a kids' section, make it huge, do the outreach, have the events, take the time to make it work. And it will. That way, you can at least attempt to get the next generation of readers into your store.

Alternatively, maybe just go big on Doomsday Clock and the like. But that way, you're pretty much putting your hands up and telling the reading world that you just don't care, you don't want new readers, and although I'll lament the fact that the for sale signs go up, I won't be surprised.

It's your choice. You want to sell to an ever-ageing customer base? Fine, go out of business and prove you're nothing more than an amateur pretending to run a business. Or look to the future, grow your customer base and have continued success that keeps you in business AND keeps this medium we love thriving and growing.

Your choice.

Author: Richard Bruton | **Twitter:**@richardbruton

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CHAPTER ONE:
ESCAPE TO...
RADFORD?
THEIR HOME--MANY LIGHT YEARS DISTANT.
THEIR SPECIES--ALIEN, CERTAINLY. NOT LIKE US. NOT AT ALL LIKE US.
AND YET WE CAN EASILY IMAGINE THEIR EMOTIONS AS THEY SEE THEIR MOON FILLING THE SKY, THE FEARSOME FIST OF DOOM HURTLING TOWARDS THEM.
DAN CORNWELL

AND THEN--THEIR WORLD IS NO MORE.
THE FRACTURED PLANET'S DEBRIS--MOUNTAIN RANGES--WHOLE CITIES--HURLED INTO THE ENDLESS COSMOS.
AND AMONG IT WHO WOULD NOTICE A SMALL WARP CRAFT, SHIELDS AGLOW, BUFFETED BY THE STORM?

ABOARD, WHAT APPEARS TO BE THE SOLE SURVIVOR OF AN ANCIENT RACE--
BUT APPEARANCES CAN BE DECEPTIVE.
SHIELDS ARE HOLDING. SYSTEMS OPERATIONAL.
ACCELERATE TO WARP SPEED.
I BARELY ESCAPED WITH MY LIFE. AND WHAT HAVE I LEFT BEHIND? A WHOLE PLANET BLOWN FROM EXISTENCE-- COUNTLESS LIFEFORMS DESTROYED.
I, ROK, 97th OF THE LINE OF ARKADY, BROUGHT THIS UPON THEM. THE GUILT WEIGHS HEAVILY...
YET I CANNOT ALLOW MY WORK TO BE BROUGHT TO AN UNTIMELY CONCLUSION. UPON IT THE FATE OF WHOLE SYSTEMS HANGS.
I MUST FIND ANOTHER REFUGE-- SOMEWHERE BEYOND THE MURDEROUS GRASP OF MY PURSUERS.
SET COURSE FOR THE FAR REACHES OF THE GALAXY.
COMPLYING.

I MUST REST, RETURN TO MY TRUE FORM. THE EFFORT OF THE MORPHOSIS HAS DRAINED ME.

PHIL MORGAN'S CUT OUT THE PASS!
HE'S A GOOD OLD PRO! KNEES MAY BE SHOT BUT HE CAN STILL READ THE GAME!
MORGAN
4
WIGGI
RS

BEAUTIFUL LITTLE BALL! DIXON'S ON IT LIKE A GREYHOUND!
COME ON, KYLE!
THE BOY'S GOT WINGS! HE'S LEFT MARTIN STANDING!
PASSSSS!
OH NO! HERE WE GO! SIMPLE PASS IS TOO EASY FOR THE GREAT KYLE!
AN OPEN GOAL--BENNO BEGGING FOR IT-- AND DIXON STARTS HIS SHOWBOATING AGAIN!

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YOU'VE GOT TO BE *BLIND!* WHOSE SIDE ARE YOU ON? YOU'VE HAD IT IN FOR ME SINCE THAT GAME AT CHARLTON! THAT'S IT, ISN'T IT?
YOU DON'T CHANGE. ONE MORE REMARK AND YOU'RE OFF!
SHUT IT, KYLE!
ANDREWS
I DON'T TAKE ORDERS FROM AN OLD *HAS-BEEN* LIKE YOU, MORGAN.
YOU'LL TAKE MY FIST IN YOUR JAW IF YOU'RE NOT CAREFUL.
MINE AS WELL. YOU'RE A WASTE OF SPACE, DIXON.
KYLE'S *GOOD,* ISN'T HE, GRANDAD?
I'VE NEVER SEEN A YOUNGSTER WITH SO MUCH NATURAL ABILITY, JAKE.
BUT HE'S SELFISH. THINKS HE'S THE STAR AND NOBODY ELSE IS WORTH A BEAN.
BAD ATTITUDE, THAT'S HIS PROBLEM. KID STARTED AT THE TOP AND IS RAPIDLY WORKING HIS WAY TO THE BOTTOM. HOW DO YOU THINK *WE* GOT HIM?
BEEN THROUGH MORE CLUBS THAN BARNEY RUBBLE AND LET EVERY ONE OF THEM DOWN. MORE *MOUTH* THAN THE MISSISSIPPI.
WHICH HE WOULD HAPPILY *DRINK* IF IT WAS *LAGER.* SIX MONTHS HE'S BEEN AT THE *REDS* AND HE'S BEEN NOTHING BUT TROUBLE. I FOR ONE WOULD BE HAPPY TO SEE HIM GO.
PHEEEEEEEEEE
RED?
NO WAY! NO *WAY!*

YOU COULD HAVE CRIPPLED HIM!
YOU'VE SEEN HIM PLAY--IT WOULD BE AN IMPROVEMENT!
YOU'RE A CERTIFIED MANIAC, DIXON!
GET OFF THE FIELD! I'M SICK OF YOU!
AN' I'M SICK OF YOU! BUNCH OF NO-HOPERS! WHAT DID I DO TO DESERVE ENDING UP IN THIS HOLE?
YOU DON'T KNOW? TRY READING YOUR CLIPPINGS, LAMEBRAIN.
BOOOO!
BOOOO!
BOOOO!
TOSSERS!
YOU'RE A BLOODY LIABILITY!
GO BACK WHERE YOU CAME FROM, DIXON!
DIXON
7
RS
RS RS
NEXT: NIGHT OF THE ALIEN!

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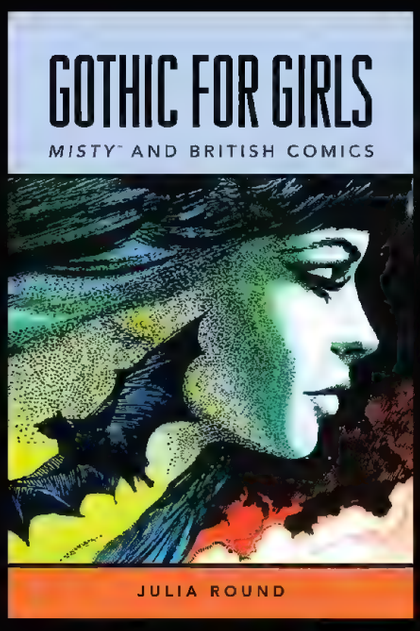


GOTHIC FOR GIRLS BOOK EXTRACT

Chapter 5 Misty's serial stories and Gothic heroines

In her new book Julia Round closely analyzes Misty's content, inc
and production, its cultural and historical context, key influences,

The Misty serials all follow the same rough outline. We are introduced to a female protagonist who quickly develops a problem of some kind. This may be the manifestation of a supernatural power (visions, telekinesis, telepathy), or the intrusion of a mysterious or magical object (a box of paints, a ring, a mirror, a car, a swimsuit). Alternatively the protagonist may find herself trapped in an unhappy situation (a new family, school or world) or become aware of some deception (a secret prisoner or plot of some kind). The plot develops as they discover new information relating to the item or their situation. These categories can overlap: for example Gayle's mirror in 'Day of the Dragon' reveals that she is the reincarnation of Cheng Hsiao Feng, and Nicola's cat ring reveals her destiny as the Chosen One of Bast ('The Cult of the Cat') - blurring the lines between internal powers and external objects. Similarly, magical objects or external forces can also serve as the source of antagonism and create a situation from which the protagonist struggles to escape ('Journey into Fear', 'Paint it Black', 'The Silver Racer-Back'). Many trapped protagonists also become aware of a mystery or deception of some kind: for example 'Nightmare Academy' revolves around Sharon's attempts to discover the secret that Madame Nocturne is hiding, and Sarah remains at Pendleton Manor to investigate its secrets ('Midnight Masquerader').

However, one common feature of this plot is its focus on a protagonist who has to accept or overcome some aspect of their self, which underpins eleven of the thirty-three serials. This is often a hidden part or special power, and might be revealed by a mysterious or magical object. A good example is 'The Cult of the Cat', which was the lead story in the very first issue of Misty and one of just two of its serials to spark a sequel ('The Nine Lives of Nicola'). Written by Bill Harrington with art by Homero, it tells the story of Nicola Scott and her acceptance of her destiny as The Chosen One of Bast. The story cuts between Egypt and England, as messenger Charmian is dispatched to awaken Nicola to her gifts so she can take her role as a High Priestess in the Temple of Bast. Charmian follows Nicola around, placing a cat ring on her finger while she sleeps. Nicola cannot remove it and then begins to develop catlike traits (fear of water, ability to climb and balance, light-reflective eyes) and has new knowledge and visions of Egypt. The tension comes from Nicola's fear at the 'slow frightening cycle of chang she undergoes (#7) and her sightings of Charmian, and also from our uncertainty as to the Cult's intentions, which are framed ominously and as a potential threat throughout. For example Charmian insists 'You must learn to follow w out questio and members of the Cult implore 'Give her [Nicola] the fortitude to accept her fate.' (#3) Even at the final episo

IT'S NO USE... I AM READY
MEANWHILE FAR AWAY IN ENGLAND NICOLA SCOTT HAD NO INKLING OF THESE EVENTS...
A MOMENT...
IT IS WELL DONE
THE CAT WILL HAVE A CHOICE DIE ALL BE BOUND TO YOU

whether the Cult wishes Nicola harm, as Charmian removes Nicola's powers while she is climbing, causing her to fall. The resolution that Nicola is only required to send her 'secret self' to Egypt, remaining physically with her family in the new knowledge that she is a very special person, is widely contained in the final two pages and arguably a bit of an anti-climax. This might have been the reason for the story's return as 'The Nine Lives of Nicola' (#53-#64), which offers an actual antagonist as the Temple of Bast is attacked by the Cobra King and Nicola must help save the Cult.

Nicola can be read as a persecuted and pursued Gothic heroine in flight in both stories, as per Smith (2013b: 129) comments on this figure: Each Gothic heroine is an exemplar of female sensibility born into a world that is blind, indifferent, or hostile to her special qualities. Each must pass through a liminal state in which her true identity is concealed, and all are relentlessly pursued by a Gothic villain intent on depriving them of their virtue, their inheritance, or both. Finally, in an act of Providence, each is rewarded with a happy ending in the final few pages.

The framing of the Cult's intentions as dangerous and villainous encourages a reading of the story in this light, which is continued in its sequel where Princess Ravala pursues Nicola. Commenting on the Radcliffean Gothic, Smith (2013b: 144) notes further that 'it is precisely the displacement of the Gothic heroine that enables her to come into contact with, and to [illegible] the limits of [illegible] and of the [illegible]'s contemporary life in England adds to this reading.

While the plot of 'The Cult of the Cat' may be a little stretched, its delivery is tense and the story is visually ambitious. Harrington's [illegible] effectively as she repeatedly [illegible] your cats and your [illegible] (#15) to [illegible] spectacle of Ancient Egypt through [illegible] pages are particularly [illegible] acolytes in mystic rituals: burning incense, scrying, and chanting. The main body of the story sustains this exoticism by constantly cutting between the two locations. This creates a hallucinogenic quality as Egypt is so evocatively drawn and the location jump is [illegible] narration. The frequent transformations (from human to [illegible]) by this dream-like quality and are [illegible] imagery using the De Luca e[illegible] Along similar lines, shadows and reflections [illegible] the [illegible] and panel borders [illegible] #6).

Figure 5.1

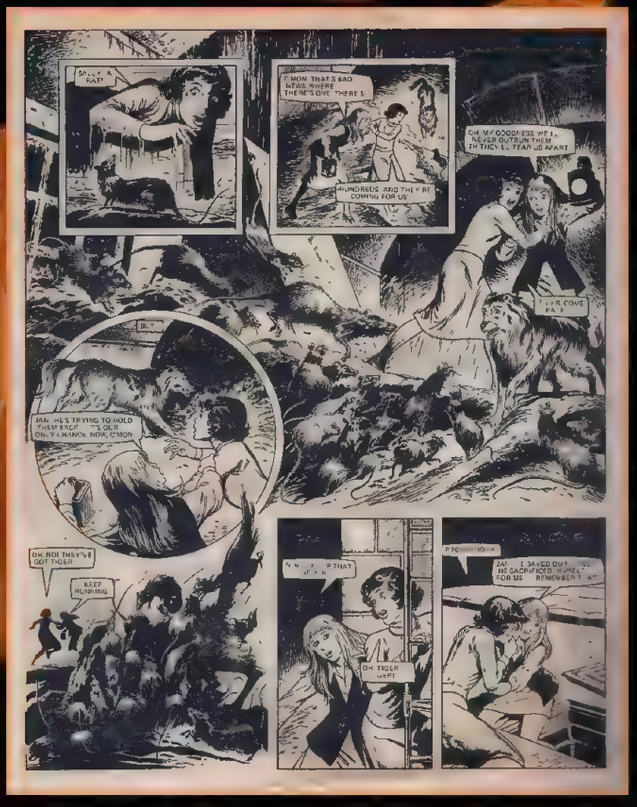
'The Cult of Cat' (Misty #1). Art by Homero, written by Bill Harrington. Reproduced with permission of Misty™ Rebellion Publishing IP Ltd; copyright © Rebellion Publishing IP Ltd, all rights reserved.

The alternate [illegible] of a protagonist trapped or otherwise sucked into an unhappy or mysterious situation (such as a new family, school or world) features fifteen times. Lucy is sent to stay with her creepy Uncle in 'Screaming Point', Lizzie narrowly escapes Madame Blaze's 'House of Horror', Elena is trapped in Ancient Greece ('A Leap Through Time'), and Jenny is prevented from leaving 'The School of the Lost'. An indicative example is 'The Sentinels' (#1-#12), in which an old tower block provides Jan [illegible] access to a terrifying world where the Nazis won World War II, which she struggles to escape. She encounters doubles of her family and friends and, after Jan's father becomes trapped in a Nazi prison, Alt-Jan must ultimately give up her own father to take his place. The story is surprisingly dramatic and graphic, with [illegible] (#4), a splash page of Jan's brutally beaten father (#11), and a horrifying page in which her pet dog Tiger is eaten alive by [illegible] (#4) (see figure 5.2 below). Capaldi's art is dynamic and realistic throughout the tale, using light and shade to lead the eye through the layout, and bringing in an adventurous edge. The page layout below literally foregrounds the swarming mass of rats (see panel 5) while simultaneously giving the reader a direct look at Jan and Sally's fright. Its composition uses inset and circular panels to build towards the mounting horror, making this the central subject of its panels and the page as a whole.

Figure 5.2

'The Sentinels' (Misty #4). Art by Mario Capaldi, written by Malcolm Shaw. Reproduced with permission of Misty™ Rebellion Publishing IP Ltd; copyright © Rebellion Publishing IP Ltd, all rights reserved.

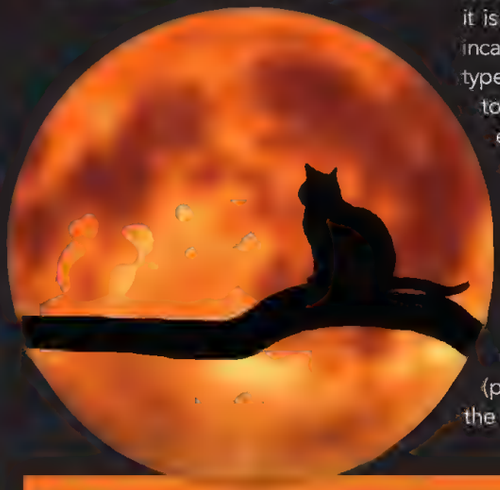
These 'trapped [illegible] do not have to be supernatural. Toni's attempts to escape her [illegible] ('Whistle and I'll Come') and Jackie's efforts to help her Gra[illegible] ('The Cats of Carey Street') are also examples of heroines who are trying to resolve or escape from a threatening situation. Similarly, the magical items discussed above may not be beneficial and instead take on or enable the role of antagonist. Sometimes the two themes are inextricably entwined – for example in 'Paint it Black' Maggie's box of paints allows her to create wonderful pictures, but this causes her father to imprison her out of greed, and immerses her in the Thursby family mystery,


SALLY-RAT!
C'MON THAT'S BAD NEWS...WHERE THERE'S ONE...THERE'S
HUNDREDS AND THEY'RE COMING FOR US
OH MY GOODNESS WE'LL NEVER OUTRUN THEM THEY'LL TEAR US APART
LIKE COVE RAT
MUM...HE'S TRYING TO HOLD THEM BACK ON OUR ONLY CHANCE, NOW, C'MON
OH, NO! THEY'VE GOT TIGER
KEEP RUNNING
OH TIGER NO!!!

and only when she has helped Amy can she be free.

These trapped protagonists depict the second type of Gothic heroine – confined and incarcerated. By focusing on a trapped heroine in peril, the serials draw on 'The dreaded Female Gothic image of the imprisoned woman' (Davison 2004: 62). This represents historical fears of women about their autonomy and status as property. As Davison (2004: 54) explains: 'the married woman of the period was frequently commodified and became a femme couverte under established law–a woman whose autonomy and identity were denied as she was regarded as her husband's property. Under such circumstances, marriage signalled a figurative death for women.' Anxieties about agency and identity underlie these stories (Davison 2004, Horner 2010, Tóth 2010).

Critics have therefore read the Gothic heroine narrative as the search for an 'achieved, finished identity' (Brownstein cited in Kaplan 1983: 83); a tale of 'emotional growth' (Davison 2004: 50) in pursuit of wholeness and completion (Tóth 2010, Smith 2013b, 2017). Voyages of self-discovery that end in happy homes characterise many of the Misty serial stories. In 'Moonchild' Rosemary escapes her abusive family life and unwanted powers when her mother leaves and her grandmother dies, and she finds her new place living with her best friend Anne (#13). The Hudson family adopt Toni at the end of 'Whistle and I'll Come' (#56), Salah claims her temple at the end of 'The Salamander Girl' (#9), and Sammy's family adopt her twin Jane at the close of 'Don't Look Twice' (#66). But even if the protagonists are not given new places, their bildungsroman journey enables them to change and be happier with their old place. For example in 'The Cult of the Cat' Nicola initially struggles against her destiny, saying 'No, no, go away. Keep out of my head. I hate your gods and your cats' (#7), but ultimately accepts her new identity as 'a very special person, the chosen of Bast' (#12). As Tóth observes: 'the [G]othic heroine must inevitably go through transformations of personality in order to formulate a separate and independent identity.' (2010: 23)



In the Misty serials, 'Heroinism thus becomes a process in self-awareness' (Wright 2017: 18), where pursued or imprisoned characters rise towards a happy ending and self-acceptance (although this is sometimes tinged with ambivalence after great sacrifice – see chapter ten). In this, the serials contrast with the single stories, which in general provide a transgressing heroine with swift and direct punishment (although it is worth noting this is often a form of incarceration). The tension between the two types is an important part of giving balance to the comic and these differences are explored further in chapter eight.

The contrast also had a commercial imperative that has been discussed and critiqued by fans, creators and critics. Pat Mills claims that 'one of the reasons for the decline of Misty was they went for too many one-shot stories' (2016a) and Jenni Scott (posting as comixminx) also 'attribute[s] the failure of the title to having run too many one-off stories' (Comics UK 2015). These claims are not entirely correct: my analysis of every tenth issue shows that at Misty's start the serials dominated, with four or five serial installments and two to three single stories in each issue. This weighting shifts around halfway through the run where each issue contains two to three serials and four to five singles. It then evens out towards the end, with three serials and three singles in every issue. Mills (2016a) describes the move to include more single stories as 'pure laziness' and 'an easy way out' when compared with crafting a longer serial, even of the adaptive type that he pioneered with 'Moonchild' and 'Hush, Hush, Sweet Rachel'. As he explains: 'It would have been a natural thing for example to have other Stephen King stories and had a hotel, or a giant werewolf […] they didn't want to do that because it requires a commitment, you've got to sit down, you have to read a 400 page novel […] you've got to analyse it and then you can say "Can I make this acceptable for eleven- to twelve-year-old girls?"'

Prigmore (2016a) responds to the criticisms by explaining that the editorial team used the self-contained stories to try out new writers and artists. There was a variety of styles to suit their particular skills: mystery, weepie, humour and so on. Also, a few complete pages in hand meant gaps could be plugged if the post was late from Spain or people were ill etc. We had thirty-two pages to fill every week and it could be touch and go sometimes! […] I know Pat Mills has said he thought there were too many one-offs in Misty, but I don't agree. What does a new reader get if they buy, say, issue five and it's full of serials. 'The story so far' can only tell you so much. But with one or two complete stories there is satisfaction to be had. And some stories, like music, only need a short time. Any longer and they lose something. Personally, I think much of the greatest literature is found in the short story.

Julia Round

is an award-winning writer and scholar whose research examines the intersections of Gothic, comics and children's literature. Her previous books include Gothic in Comics and Graphic Novels: A Critical Approach (2014) and the co-edited collection Real Lives Celebrity Stories. She is co-editor of Studies in Comics journal (Intellect) and the book series Encapsulations (University of Nebraska Press), and co-organiser of the annual International Graphic Novel and Comics Conference (IGNCC).

Julia teaches in the Faculty of Media and Communication at Bournemouth University. Her work has appeared in numerous journals & edited collections, inc. Language & Literature, International Journal of Comic Art, and Children's Literature in Education. She shares her research at her website www.juliaround.com, which also includes interviews, articles, and a searchable database of all the Misty stories and creators.

Her new book Gothic for Girls: Misty and British Comics is published by University Press of Mississippi. Hardback £90. Paperback £24.66. 320 pages. 71 colour illustrations.

'Don't Look Twice', 'The Four Faces of Eve', 'Hush, Hush, Sweet Rachel', 'Day of the Dragon', 'Moonchild', 'The Cult of the Cat', 'The Loving Cup', 'The Nine Lives of Nicola', 'The Secret World of Sally Maxwell', 'The Salamander Girl', and 'Wolf Girl'. 'Black Widow' is also continued as 'The Spider Woman' in Tammy and Misty, 19 January 1980.b

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LONDON, 1751.
MISTER FIELDING, I BELIEVE?
YOUR VOICE IS UNFAMILIAR TO ME, SIR, SO I KNOW I'M NOT ABOUT TO BE ROBBED...
YOUR HONOUR, I AM SIR HENRY SOLOMON, THE PARLIAMENTARIAN FOR NEVISON AND DISTRICT.
JUST SO. NOW, WHAT CAN I DO FOR YOU?
IT IS PERHAPS MORE OF INTEREST TO YOUR BROTHER, BUT I HAVE A PRESSING MATTER THAT NEEDS URGENT COUNSEL. COULD WE DISCUSS IT FURTHER AT A NEARBY COFFEE HOUSE?
I HAVE VERY LITTLE TO DO WITH MATTERS BEYOND THE CITY. IS IT A JUDICIARY CONCERN?
OH, MOST CERTAINLY!
MISTER FIELDING, MY CONSTITUENCY IS FIGHTING AGAINST A TIDE OF CRIMINALITY...

"... AND IT IS DOWN TO THE ACTIONS OF A SINGLE INDIVIDUAL!"
LADY
FLINTLOCK
"ONE FOR SORROW"
WRITTEN BY: STEVE TANNER
ART BY: ANTHONY SUMMEY
LETTERS BY: BOLT-01

PLEASE! HAVE MERCY! WE BEG YOU!
I DON'T WANT ANY TROUBLE. JUST SEE ME RIGHT AND YOU'LL BE ON YOUR WAY.
BUT WE'VE ALREADY BEEN ROBBED! BARELY TEN MINUTES PAST!
IT'S TRUTH. WE THOUGHT HE WAS JUST A HOB NAIL AT FIRST, ON ACCOUNT HE WAS THERE LYING IN THE ROAD LIKE HE'D BEEN SET ON HIMSELF.
AYE, I THOUGHT THAT YOU'D DONE FOR HIM ALREADY.
SO WE PULLS UP TO TAKE A LOOK.
SUDDENLY HE WAS UP AND ABOUT AND THREATENING A BLADE!

WE'VE NOTHING ELSE, I SWEAR, BUT FOR THE CLOTHES ON OUR BACKS!
JUST A KNIFE, YOU SAY? YOU DIDN'T CHALLENGE HIM?
IT WAS THE WAY HE WAS SMILING - HE WAS NO PIGEON. IT FAIR MADE US THINK TWICE ABOUT CAUSING A SET-TO.
THEN HE CLEANED US ALL OUT! SORRY, SQUIRE, BUT YOU'LL FIND NO MORE PICKINGS ON THIS COACH TONIGHT...
MOVE ALONG THEN - BE ON YOUR WAY!
GO!
BLAM!

BUT THIS IS *OUR* PATCH, MISS!
THERE'S NO HONOUR AMONGST THIEVES, LIZZIE. WHOEVER THIS FELLOW IS, HE'S COST US A PRETTY PENNY TONIGHT. *DAMN HIS EYES!*
SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WELL, YOU NEED TO TAKE SOME PISTOLS TO THE GUNSMITH. THEY'RE NOT HANDLING RIGHT.
I'LL RIDE OUT SUNRISE AND SEE IF I CAN FIND WHERE THIS *SMILING MAGPIE* IS NESTING.
BY THEN THAT BIRD WILL BE *LONG FLOWN* - AND WITH *OUR* TRINKETS!
PERHAPS. BUT I THINK A MAN WHO LIES DOWN IN FRONT OF AN ONCOMING COACH WITH JUST A BLADE AND NO HORSE GOES TO GROUND INSTEAD OF FLEEING...

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"... AND THAT MEANS WHOEVER HE IS, HE'S *NO* HIGHWAYMAN!"
COME ON, I DON'T HAVE ALL DAY!
I HAVE RINGS - SEE? *TAKE THEM!*
AND *COIN*, EH? I'LL BE WANTING THAT, TOO.
I - I JUST HAVE THIS *SINGLE PURSE*. SEVERAL SHILLINGS, SOME PENNIES. I'M TRAVELLING LIGHT, YOU SEE, ON ACCOUNT OF - OF -
- OF THE CHANCE IN MEETING SOMEONE LIKE ME, EH? WELL, WE'VE MET NOW. AREN'T YOU THE *LUCKY* ONE?
BEST YOU GET ALONG, NOW THAT WE'VE FINISHED OUR BUSINESS.
MIND HOW YOU GO, EH?
"A FINE MORNING WOULDN'T YOU SAY, *MISS LIZZIE?*"

PERHAPS, THOMAS BATLEY, BUT I'M FAR TOO BUSY TO NOTICE SUCH THINGS AND MY BASKET FAR TOO HEAVY.
THEN LET ME HELP YOU!
NO!
I MEAN, IT'S OF NO CONSEQUENCE. BUT I'LL LET YOU WALK WITH ME AWHILE IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE REALLY AFTER...
PERHAPS YOU'D CARE TO WALK WITH ME REGULAR, IF YOU'VE A MIND TO?
WELL, THAT DEPENDS HOW MUCH OF A GENTLEMAN YOU TURN OUT TO BE...
LOOK OUT!
OHHH!!
ARE YOU HURT, MISS LIZZIE?
NO, I'M FINE. JUST A LIGHT SPRAIN, I THINK. THAT NAG MUST HAVE THE DEVIL CHASING IT TO BE GOING SO FAST!

NO WONDER YOUR BASKET'S SO HEAVY...
GIVE THOSE TO ME!
THEY'RE NOT LOADED, ARE THEY?
THEY MIGHT WELL BE, YOUNG SIR! WHAT'S TO SAY I DON'T PULL THE TRIGGER ON YOU RIGHT HERE AND NOW?!?
PLEASE, DON'T! MY MA WOULD MISS ME TERRIBLE! AND IT WEREN'T MY FAULT, YOU KNOW. I DIDN'T MAKE YOU DROP YOUR BASKET, THAT HORSE DID!
AND THAT'S WHY I'LL FORGIVE YOUR IMPERTINENCE ON THIS OCCASION. BUT MARK MY WORDS, YOU WHISPER OF THIS TO ANOTHER SOUL...
I SWEAR I WON'T, MISS LIZZIE, UPON MY LIFE!
SEE THAT YOU DON'T!
SHE FORGOT THIS ONE...
TO BE CONTINUED...

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COMICSCENE PRESENTS

CORKER!

NO.1 FREE!

COME IN FOR COMICS!

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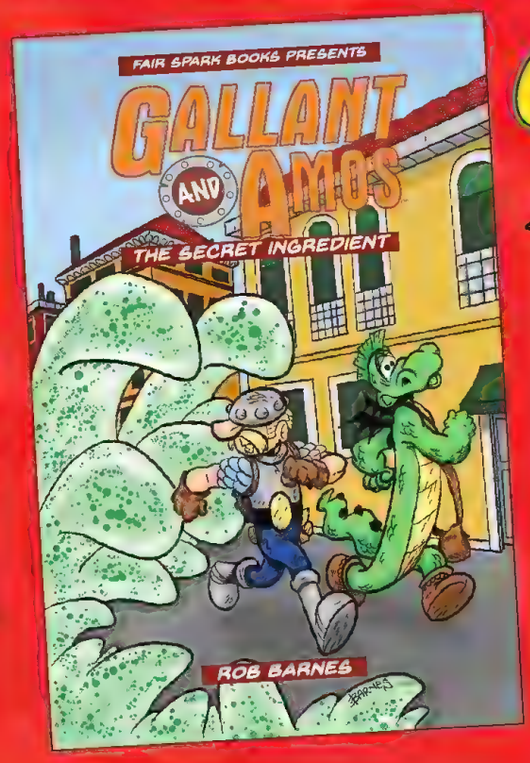
Welcome to Corker! the new kids comic **FREE** with ComicScene Magazine. If you have managed to get your hands on this collectors item first issue you are very lucky as there is **lots of great comics for you to enjoy** (and it may be worth oodles of cash when you are older)...

MegaAtomic Battle Rabbit by Stu Perrins and Israel Huretas

When a mysterious blue light illuminates the skies of a small English town, science fiction fan Dexter and reluctant pal Henry embark on a torch lit adventure in the search of little green men. However, as they soon discover, not all alien life is as cute and gentle than ET would have you believe.



CORKER!

Gallant and Amos by Rob Barnes

'Gallant and Amos' is a comic about two guys travelling around a medieval world and stumbling into crazy adventures and events. Oh! and did we mention one is a Knight and the other a Dragon?

We'd love to know what you think. Let us know your favourites and send us your drawings to comicsceneuk@gmail.com ...*Team Corker!*

Slash Moron by Bambos Georgiou, James Hansen and John Burns

From the team being the Wallace and Gromit comic strips comes a slapstick space opera spoof for all ages.

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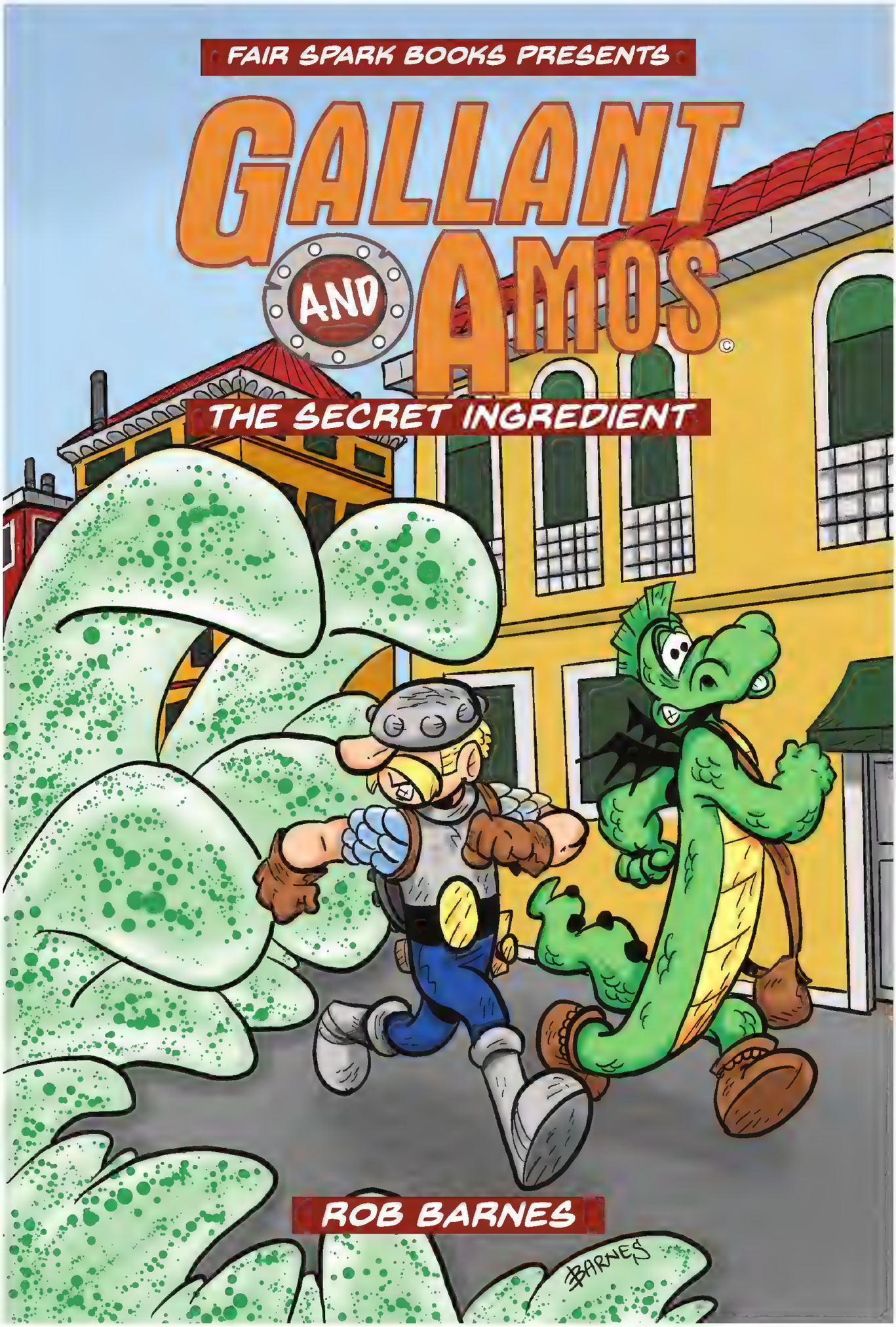
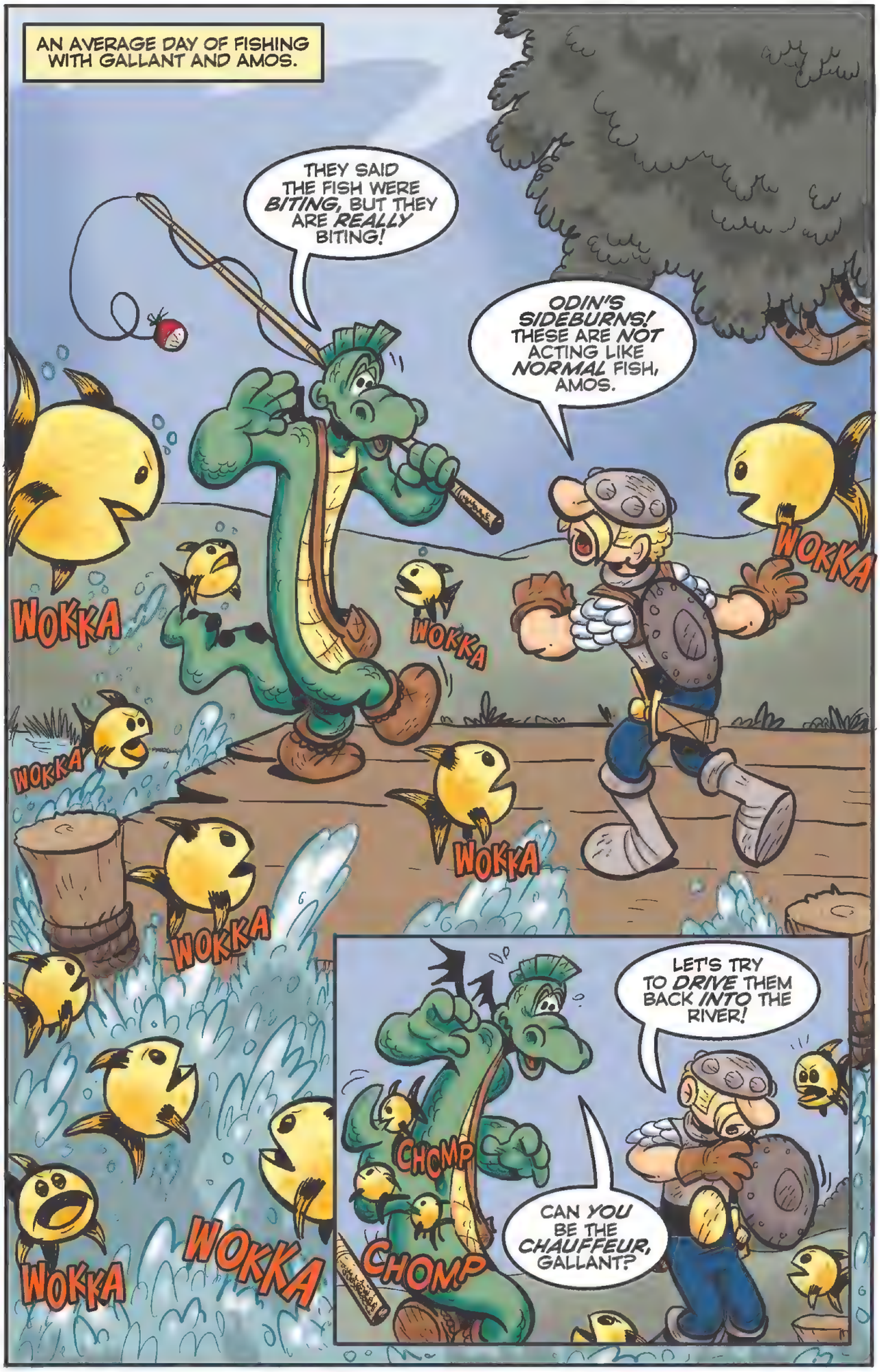


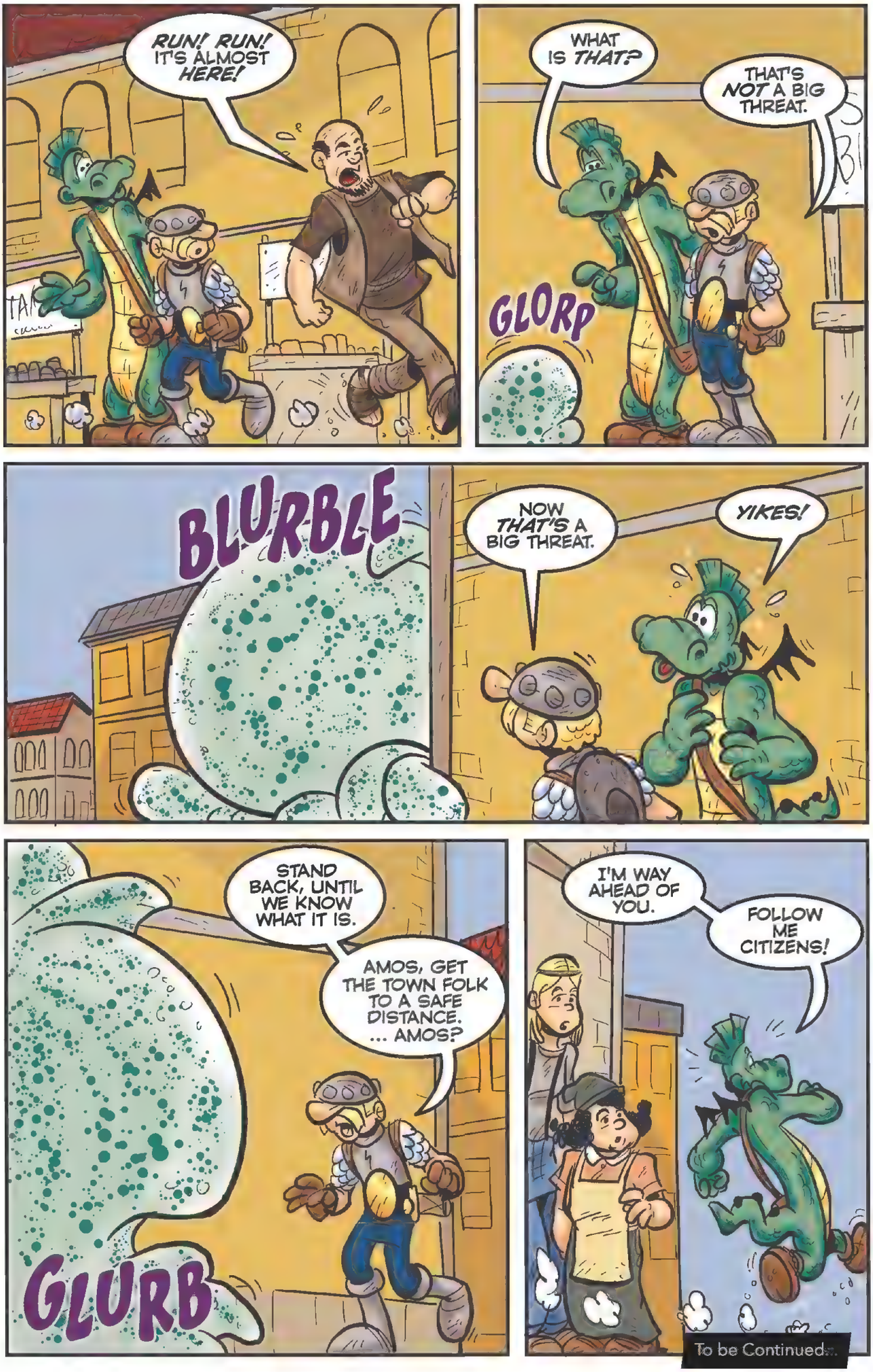

AN AVERAGE DAY OF FISHING WITH GALLANT AND AMOS.
THEY SAID THE FISH WERE *BITING*, BUT THEY ARE *REALLY* BITING!
ODIN'S SIDEBURNS! THESE ARE *NOT* ACTING LIKE *NORMAL* FISH, AMOS.
WOKKA
WOKKA
WOKKA
WOKKA
WOKKA
WOKKA
WOKKA
WOKKA
LET'S TRY TO *DRIVE* THEM BACK *INTO* THE RIVER!
CHOMP
CHOMP
CAN *YOU* BE THE *CHAUFFEUR*, GALLANT?

YOU ASKED FOR IT, FISH!
FOOSH
SPRITZ
AGH! IT'S A SPRITZ AND RUN!
HEE HEE!
HOW ARE YOU FARING, AMOS?
THIS LOOKS LIKE THE LAST ONE.
BWONK
THAT WORKED UP A THIRST. WANT SOME WATER?
THANKS.
I THINK WE BETTER FIND ANOTHER PLACE TO FISH.
GULP
MAYBE UPSTREAM.
hiccup!
NOW, THAT FEELS STRANGE...
UH OH.

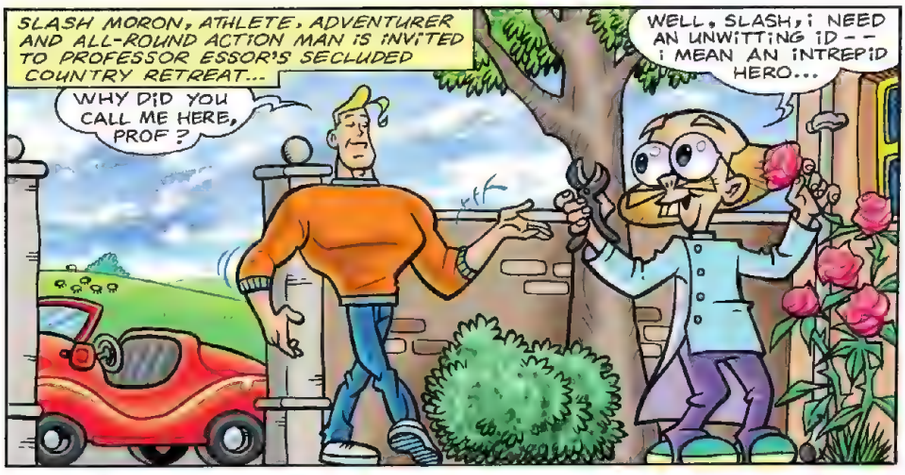
WHAT'S WRONG? I FEEL STRANGE.
LET ME GET YOU A MIRROR.
GROGG'S BEARD! WHAT HAPPENED TO ME?!?
THAT'S A GOOD LOOK, GALLANT.
BURP
ZING
PARDON.
THAT CHANGED YOU BACK. UNFORTUNATELY.
WHERE DID YOU GET THAT WATER?
FROM THE RIVER.
THROW IT OUT!
YOU KNOW, THIS WOULD MAKE A GREAT PARTY TRICK.
LET'S GO TO THE NEXT TOWN UPSTREAM. MAYBE THEY'LL KNOW WHAT'S POLLUTING THE WATER.

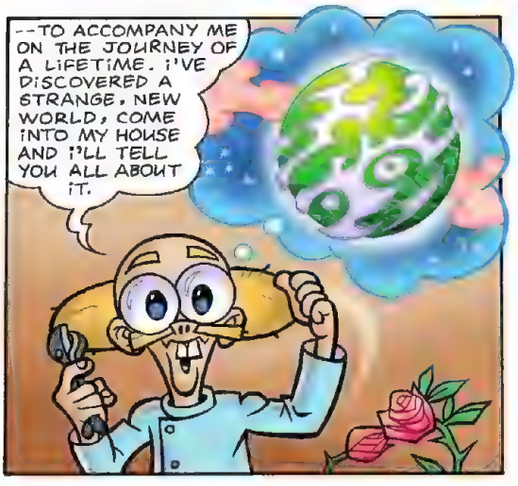
UPSTREAM AT RIVERVALE. A TOWN BUILT ON BOTH SIDES OF THE RIVER.
DRAT! ANOTHER POTION DOWN THE DRAIN!
THAT LAST ONE WAS FAIR, BUT THE NEXT ONE WILL KNOCK THEIR SOCKS OFF!
LET'S SEE POLLY TOP THIS!
JUST ACROSS THE RIVER...
HAH! THIS NEW ELIXIR IS GOING TO PUT HAZEL'S TO SHAME.
I SEE POLLY COOKING UP A NEW BATCH.
SHE DOESN'T HAVE A CHANCE.
OH! HAZEL SEES ME. I BETTER GIVE HER A SMILE.
SHE IS SO GOING TO LOSE.
LOOK AT HER SMILING AND HAPPY OVER THERE.
WE'LL SEE IF SHE'S SMILING AT THE MARKET LATER.

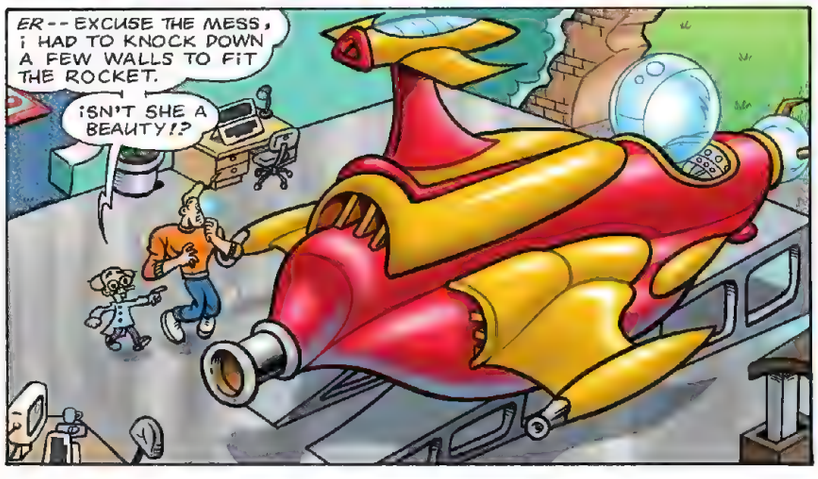
LATER AT THE RIVERVALE MARKET.
GOOD DAY, POLLY. HAVE A CUPCAKE?
SALUTATIONS, HAZEL. TRY A FIZZY JUICE?
ACHOO
FOOSH
HAZEL'S BAKED GOODS
POLLY FIZZY
SORRY. ALLERGIES.
MY BAKED GOODS HAVE BEEN SAID TO CURE SLIGHT ALLERGIES.
TRY A FIZZY JUICE. IT WILL SOOTHE THE SOUL.
POLLY'S FIZZY JUICE
COULD I BORROW SOME COIN? THEY HAVE CAKES AND JUICE!
AAAH! RUN AWAY!

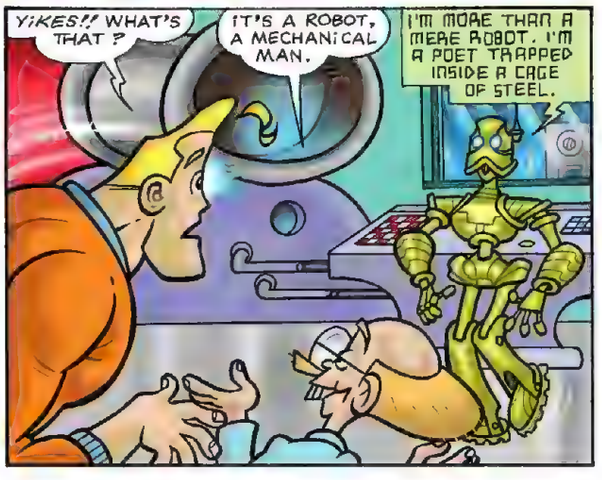

RUN! RUN! IT'S ALMOST HERE!
WHAT IS THAT?
THAT'S NOT A BIG THREAT.
GLORP
BLURBLE
NOW THAT'S A BIG THREAT.
YIKES!
STAND BACK, UNTIL WE KNOW WHAT IT IS.
AMOS, GET THE TOWN FOLK TO A SAFE DISTANCE. ... AMOS?
GLURB
I'M WAY AHEAD OF YOU.
FOLLOW ME CITIZENS!
To be Continued...

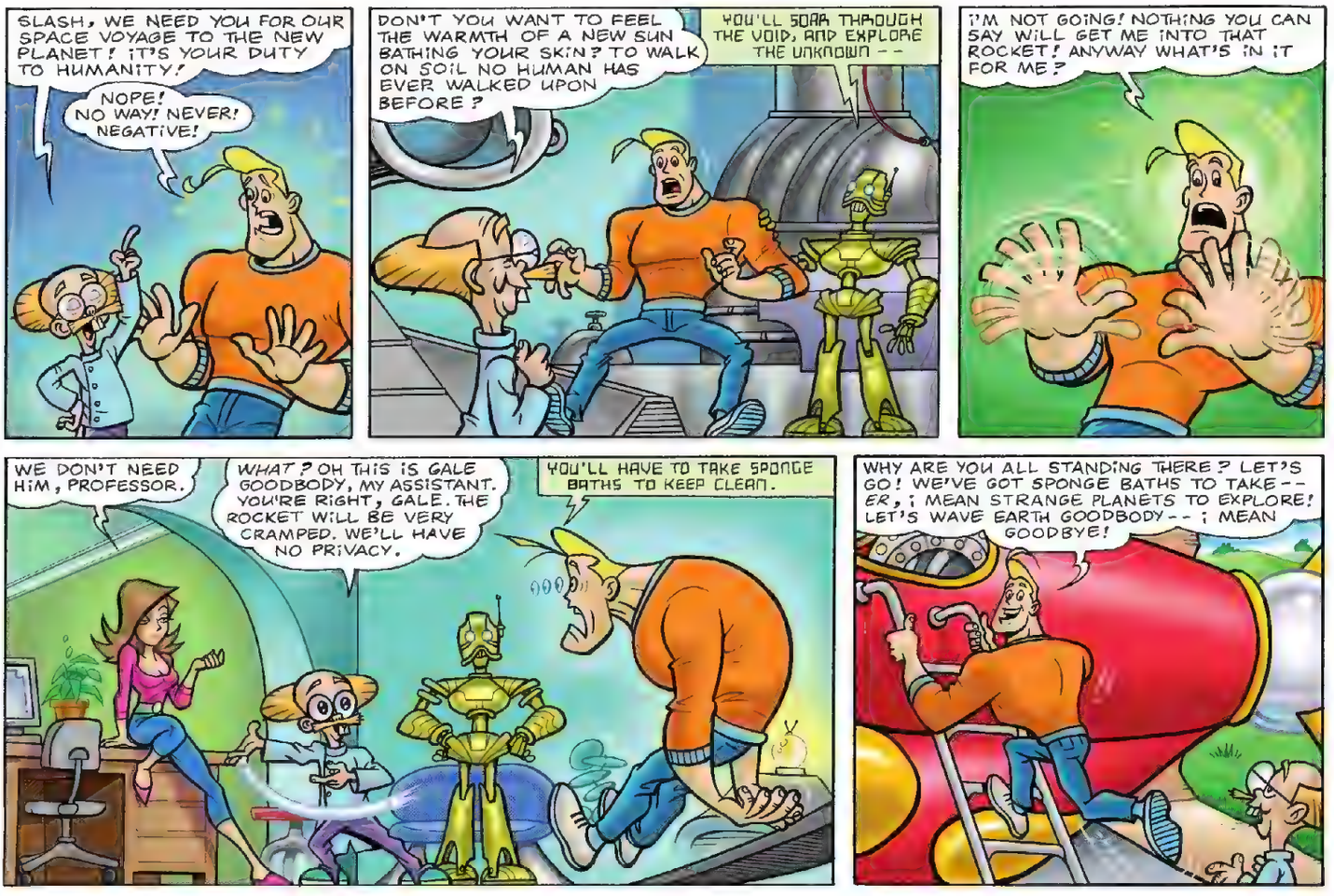
SLASH
MORON

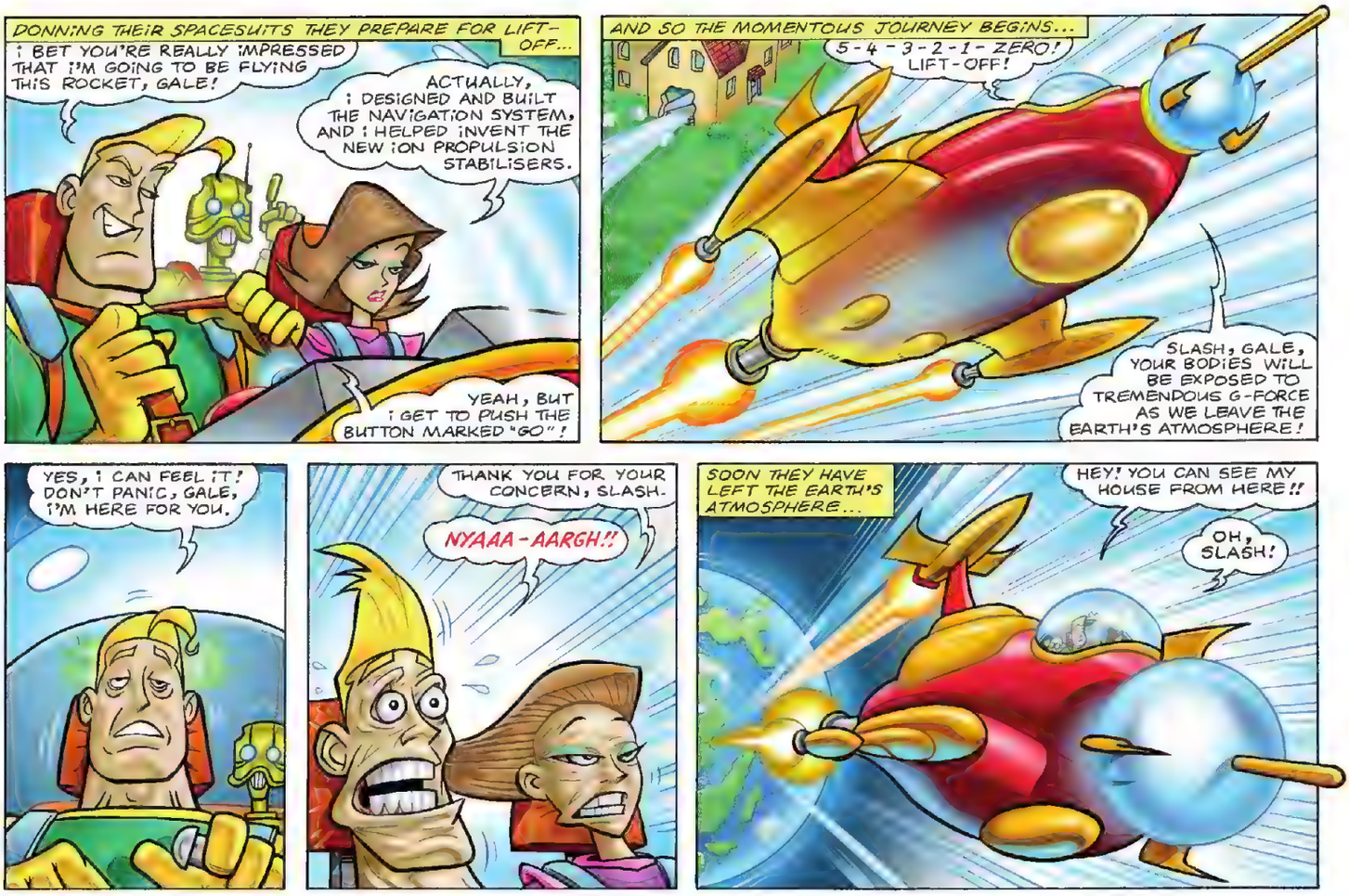

SLASH MORON, ATHLETE, ADVENTURER AND ALL-ROUND ACTION MAN IS INVITED TO PROFESSOR ESSOR'S SECLUDED COUNTRY RETREAT...
WHY DID YOU CALL ME HERE, PROF?
WELL, SLASH, I NEED AN UNWITTING ID-- I MEAN AN INTREPID HERO...


--TO ACCOMPANY ME ON THE JOURNEY OF A LIFETIME. I'VE DISCOVERED A STRANGE, NEW WORLD, COME INTO MY HOUSE AND I'LL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT IT.

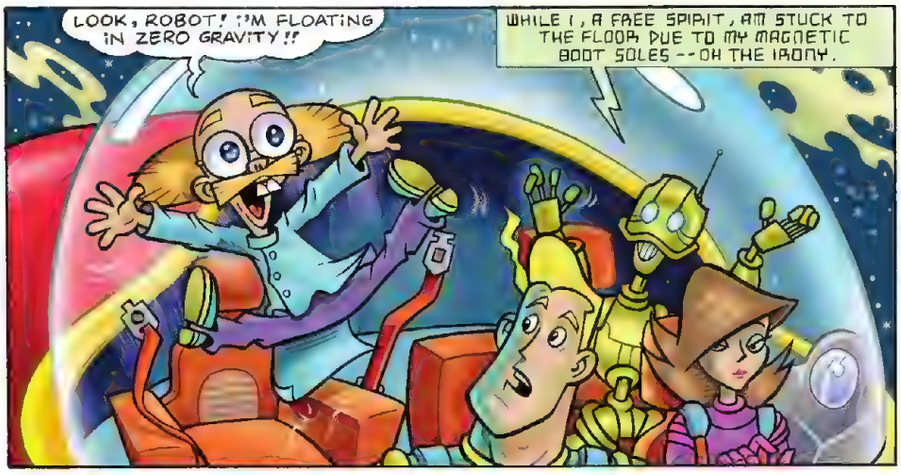

ER-- EXCUSE THE MESS, I HAD TO KNOCK DOWN A FEW WALLS TO FIT THE ROCKET.
ISN'T SHE A BEAUTY!?

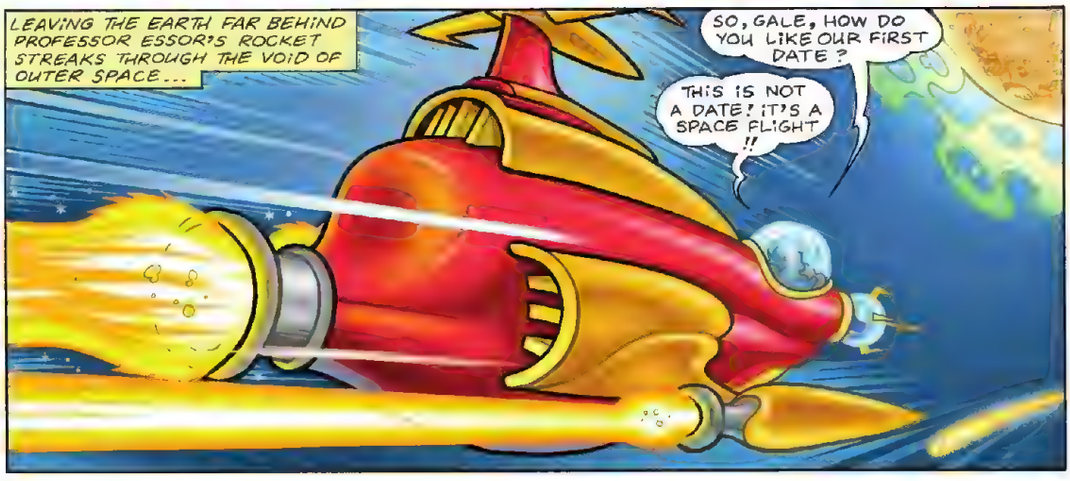

YIKES!! WHAT'S THAT?
IT'S A ROBOT, A MECHANICAL MAN.
I'M MORE THAN A MERE ROBOT. I'M A POET TRAPPED INSIDE A CAGE OF STEEL.


SLASH, WE NEED YOU FOR OUR SPACE VOYAGE TO THE NEW PLANET! IT'S YOUR DUTY TO HUMANITY!
NOPE! NO WAY! NEVER! NEGATIVE!
DON'T YOU WANT TO FEEL THE WARMTH OF A NEW SUN BATHING YOUR SKIN? TO WALK ON SOIL NO HUMAN HAS EVER WALKED UPON BEFORE?
YOU'LL SOAR THROUGH THE VOID, AND EXPLORE THE UNKNOWN --
I'M NOT GOING! NOTHING YOU CAN SAY WILL GET ME INTO THAT ROCKET! ANYWAY WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?
WE DON'T NEED HIM, PROFESSOR.
WHAT? OH THIS IS GALE GOODBODY, MY ASSISTANT. YOU'RE RIGHT, GALE. THE ROCKET WILL BE VERY CRAMPED. WE'LL HAVE NO PRIVACY.
YOU'LL HAVE TO TAKE SPONGE BATHS TO KEEP CLEAN.
WHY ARE YOU ALL STANDING THERE? LET'S GO! WE'VE GOT SPONGE BATHS TO TAKE -- ER, I MEAN STRANGE PLANETS TO EXPLORE! LET'S WAVE EARTH GOODBODY -- I MEAN GOODBYE!


DONNING THEIR SPACESUITS THEY PREPARE FOR LIFT-OFF...
I BET YOU'RE REALLY IMPRESSED THAT I'M GOING TO BE FLYING THIS ROCKET, GALE!
ACTUALLY, I DESIGNED AND BUILT THE NAVIGATION SYSTEM, AND I HELPED INVENT THE NEW ION PROPULSION STABILISERS.
YEAH, BUT I GET TO PUSH THE BUTTON MARKED "GO"!
AND SO THE MOMENTOUS JOURNEY BEGINS...
5-4-3-2-1-ZERO! LIFT-OFF!
SLASH, GALE, YOUR BODIES WILL BE EXPOSED TO TREMENDOUS G-FORCE AS WE LEAVE THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE!
YES, I CAN FEEL IT! DON'T PANIC, GALE, I'M HERE FOR YOU.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONCERN, SLASH.
NYAAA-AARGH!!
SOON THEY HAVE LEFT THE EARTH'S ATMOSPHERE...
HEY! YOU CAN SEE MY HOUSE FROM HERE!!
OH, SLASH!

SPACE--IT'S PRETTY DARN BIG, ISN'T IT? ALL THOSE STARS TWINKLING, MAKES YOU FEEL ROMANTIC DOESN'T IT?
NO.


LOOK, ROBOT! I'M FLOATING IN ZERO GRAVITY!!
WHILE I, A FREE SPIRIT, AM STUCK TO THE FLOOR DUE TO MY MAGNETIC BOOT SOLES--OH THE IRONY.

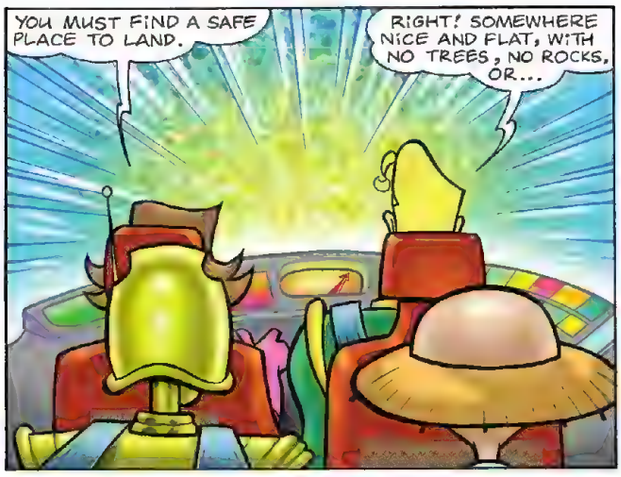

LEAVING THE EARTH FAR BEHIND PROFESSOR ESSOR'S ROCKET STREAKS THROUGH THE VOID OF OUTER SPACE...
SO, GALE, HOW DO YOU LIKE OUR FIRST DATE?
THIS IS NOT A DATE! IT'S A SPACE FLIGHT!!

JUST TAKE A LEFT AT THE SUN, SLASH, THEN STRAIGHT ON FOR THREE BILLION MILES.

THREE BILLION MILES LATER...
NEW PLANET STRAIGHT AHEAD!
WHEN DO I GET TO PUSH THE BUTTON MARKED "STOP", GALE?

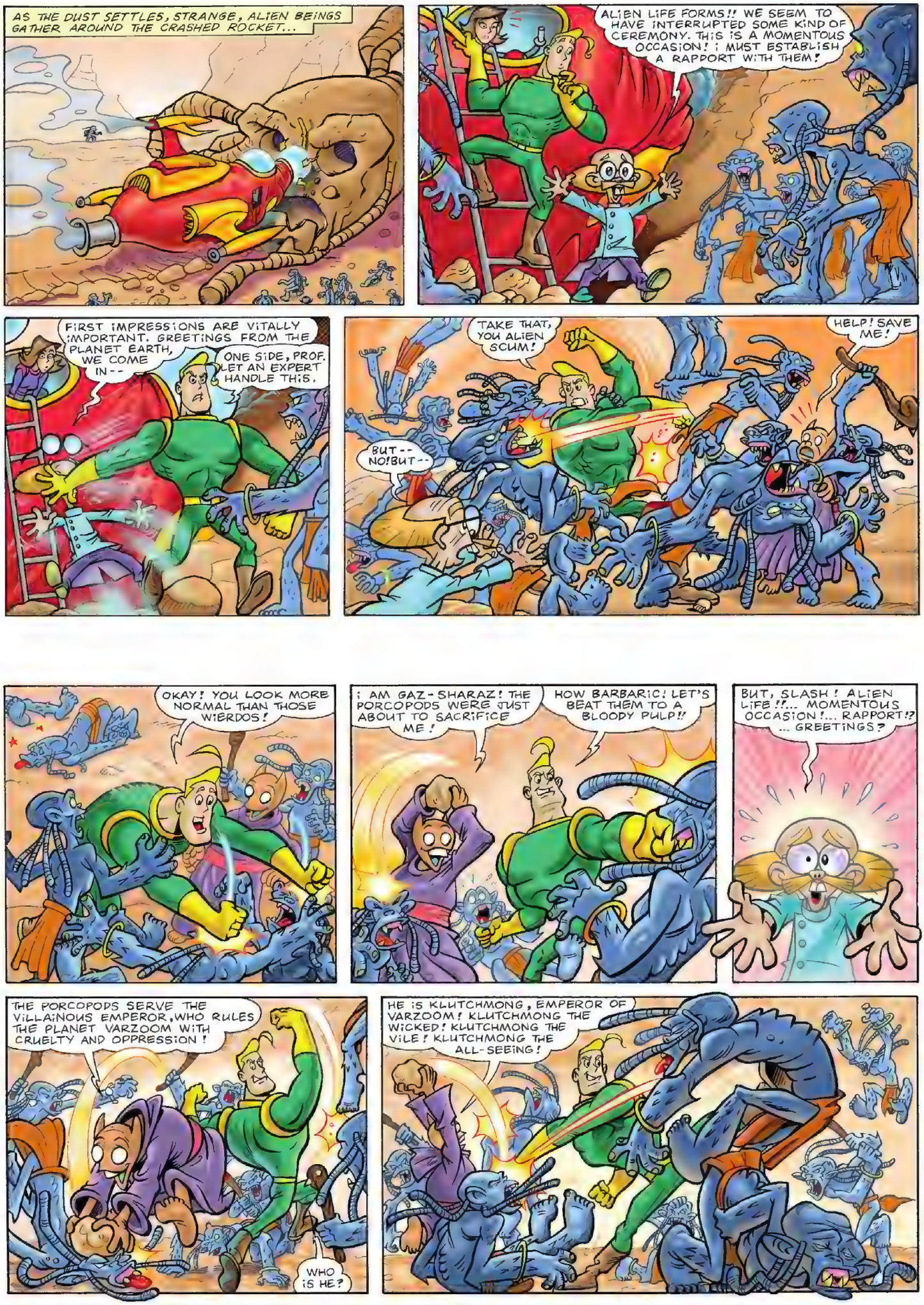
WE'RE ENTERING THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE, ENGAGE THE STABILISERS.
NO SWEAT, GALE. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT TO DO!

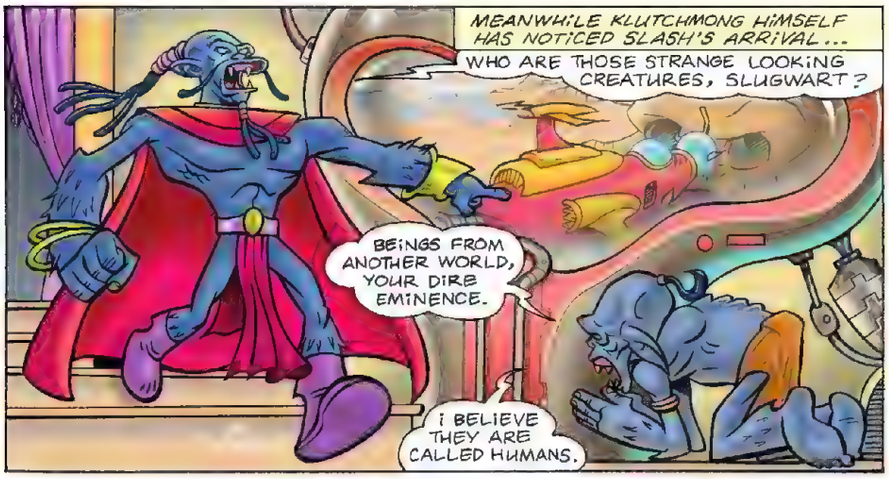
YAAAHH!! WE'RE ON FIRE! I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO!
THAT'S JUST THE HEAT OF OUR ENTERING THE PLANET'S ATMOSPHERE. FIRE RETROS, SLASH!


YOU MUST FIND A SAFE PLACE TO LAND.
RIGHT! SOMEWHERE NICE AND FLAT, WITH NO TREES, NO ROCKS, OR...

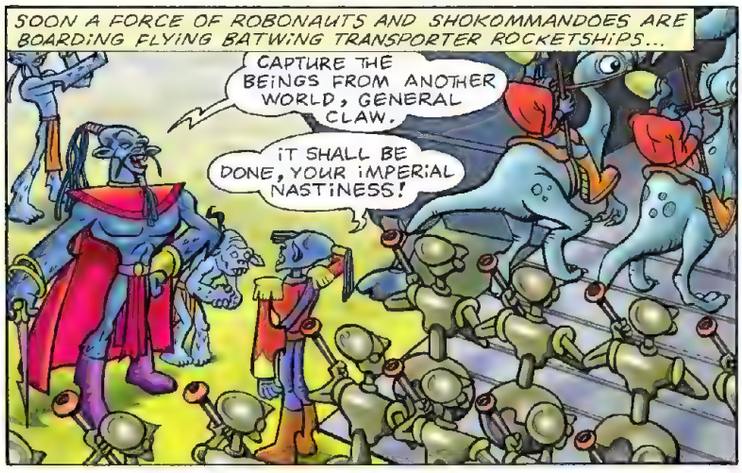
--HIDEOUS LOOMING FACES!?
LOOK OUT!

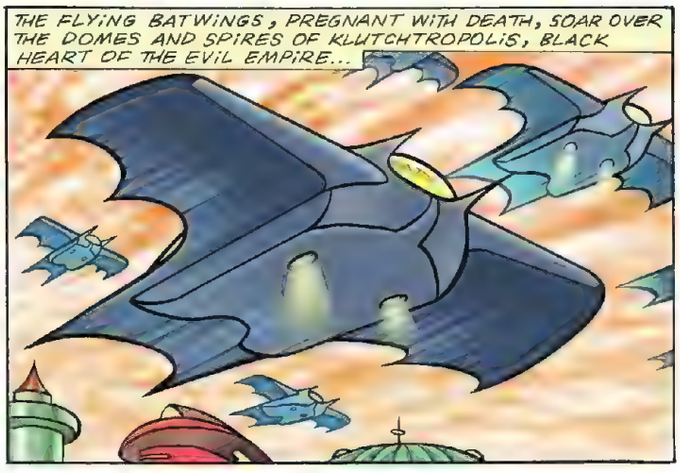
CRASH!

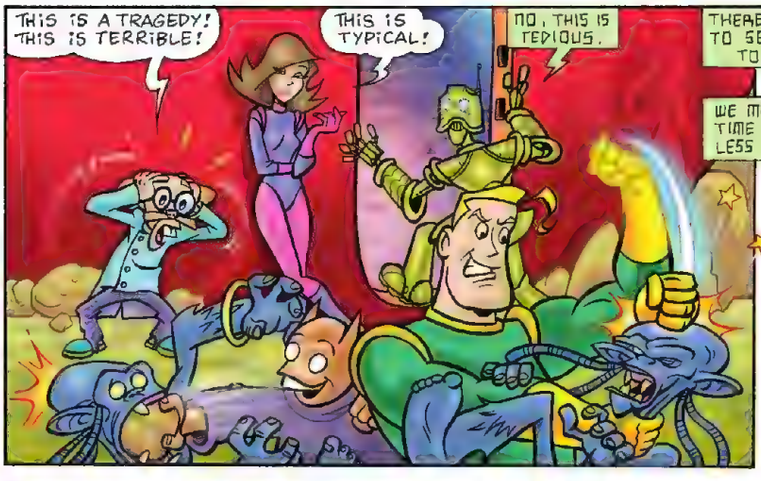

AS THE DUST SETTLES, STRANGE, ALIEN BEINGS GATHER AROUND THE CRASHED ROCKET...
ALIEN LIFE FORMS!! WE SEEM TO HAVE INTERRUPTED SOME KIND OF CEREMONY. THIS IS A MOMENTOUS OCCASION! I MUST ESTABLISH A RAPPORT WITH THEM!
FIRST IMPRESSIONS ARE VITALLY IMPORTANT. GREETINGS FROM THE PLANET EARTH, WE COME IN--
ONE SIDE, PROF. LET AN EXPERT HANDLE THIS.
TAKE THAT, YOU ALIEN SCUM!
HELP! SAVE ME!
BUT-- NO! BUT--
OKAY! YOU LOOK MORE NORMAL THAN THOSE WIERDOS!
I AM GAZ-SHARAZ! THE PORCOPODS WERE JUST ABOUT TO SACRIFICE ME!
HOW BARBARIC! LET'S BEAT THEM TO A BLOODY PULP!!
BUT, SLASH! ALIEN LIFE!!... MOMENTOUS OCCASION!... RAPPORT!? ... GREETINGS?
THE PORCOPODS SERVE THE VILLAINOUS EMPEROR, WHO RULES THE PLANET VARZOOM WITH CRUELTY AND OPPRESSION!
WHO IS HE?
HE IS KLUTCHMONG, EMPEROR OF VARZOOM! KLUTCHMONG THE WICKED! KLUTCHMONG THE VILE! KLUTCHMONG THE ALL-SEEING!

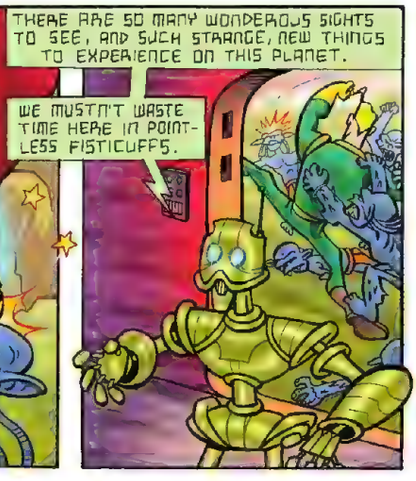

MEANWHILE KLUTCHMONG HIMSELF HAS NOTICED SLASH'S ARRIVAL...
WHO ARE THOSE STRANGE LOOKING CREATURES, SLUGWART?
BEINGS FROM ANOTHER WORLD, YOUR DIRE EMINENCE.
I BELIEVE THEY ARE CALLED HUMANS.

HMMMM. LET ME SEE... BEHEADING... BEING EVIL... BEINGS FROM ANOTHER WORLD, CAPTURE - - MARRIAGE TO FAIREST FEMALE - - OR MALE - - THROW IN ARENA - - TORTURE - - SLAVERY - - ETCETERA.
ALL SEEMS PRETTY STRAIGHT FORWARD.
HOW TO CONQUER DICTATE RULE OPPRE
DICTATING FOR DUMMIES

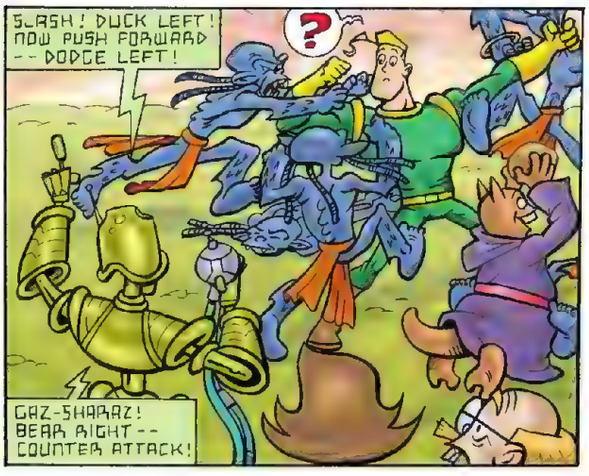

SOON A FORCE OF ROBONAUTS AND SHOKOMMANDOES ARE BOARDING FLYING BATWING TRANSPORTER ROCKETSHIPS...
CAPTURE THE BEINGS FROM ANOTHER WORLD, GENERAL CLAW.
IT SHALL BE DONE, YOUR IMPERIAL NASTINESS!

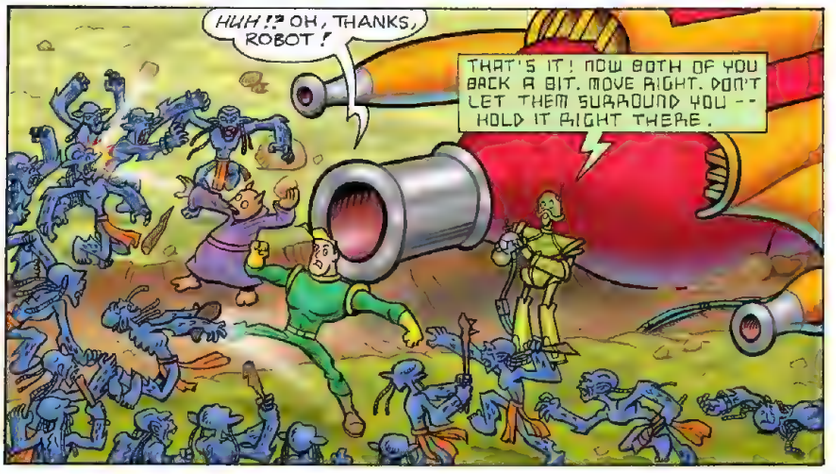

THE FLYING BATWINGS, PREGNANT WITH DEATH, SOAR OVER THE DOMES AND SPIRES OF KLUTCHTROPOLIS, BLACK HEART OF THE EVIL EMPIRE...


THIS IS A TRAGEDY! THIS IS TERRIBLE!
THIS IS TYPICAL!
NO, THIS IS TEDIOUS.


THERE ARE SO MANY WONDEROUS SIGHTS TO SEE, AND SUCH STRANGE, NEW THINGS TO EXPERIENCE ON THIS PLANET.
WE MUSTN'T WASTE TIME HERE IN POINTLESS FISTICUFFS.

HURRIEDLY THE ROBOT CONSTRUCTS A REMOTE CONTROL DEVICE...
NOW TO RETURN TO THE MEANINGLESS VIOLENCE.


SLASH! DUCK LEFT! NOW PUSH FORWARD - - DODGE LEFT!
?
GAZ-SHARAZ! BEAR RIGHT - - COUNTER ATTACK!


HUH!? OH, THANKS, ROBOT!
THAT'S IT! NOW BOTH OF YOU BACK A BIT. MOVE RIGHT. DON'T LET THEM SURROUND YOU - - HOLD IT RIGHT THERE.

KLIK!
FAVOOSH!
THAT TAKES CARE OF THE PORCOPODS. NOW LET'S PROCEED TO MORE UPLIFTING PURSUITS.
WELL DONE, ROBOT. YOU'RE HANDY TO HAVE AROUND IN A FIGHT!
PERHAPS NOW WE CAN SAVOUR THE FERTILE BEAUTY OF THIS WONDERFUL NEW WORLD. WE CAN--
FLEE!
SLAP!
WE MUST FLEE! KLUTCHMONG'S FORCES ARE APPROACHING! IF THEY CAPTURE US WE WILL BE IMPRISONED AND TORTURED! WE MUST FLEE!
!
?
FLEEING SOUNDS GOOD!
I FANCY A GOOD FLEE!
I'M ALL FOR FLEEING!
I'LL FLEE FROM THE FRONT!
SOON THE FLYING BATWING TRANSPORTER ROCKETSHIP HAS LANDED AND GENERAL CLAW SURVEYS THE DEVESTATION...
ALL THE PORCOPODS ARE UNCONSCIOUS. WE MUST FIND THE BEINGS FROM ANOTHER WORLD.
ROBONAUTS AND CHAOS CAVALRY DISEMBARK!! WE BEGIN SEARCHING AT ONCE!!
COME ON, MOVE YOU RATTLING RUSTBUCKETS!
RUMBLE!
KEEP THOSE LIZARDS MOVING OR YOU'LL END UP IN THE SLIME PITS!
To be Continued...

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ACCORDING TO THE ONLINE ORACLE KNOWN AS WIKIPEDIA, WEST BROMWHICH IS A TOWN IN THE SUBURB OF SANDWELL, A ONE TIME INDUSTRIAL AREA OF THE WEST MIDLANDS, ENGLAND.
IT IS FIVE MILES NORTHWEST OF BIRMINGHAM...
...AND IS NOT ONLY HOME TO IT'S CURRENT POPULATION OF 75,405...
PHARMACY
...BUT TO THE FOOTBALL TEAM WEST BROMWICH ALBION, WHO ARE ALSO KNOWN AS 'THE BAGGIES'
INCIDENTALLY, NONE OF THIS IS OF ANY REAL IMPORTANCE OF COURSE, PARTICULARLY NOT TO ONE OF ITS RESIDENTS, TWELVE-YEAR-OLD DEXTER DRAPER.

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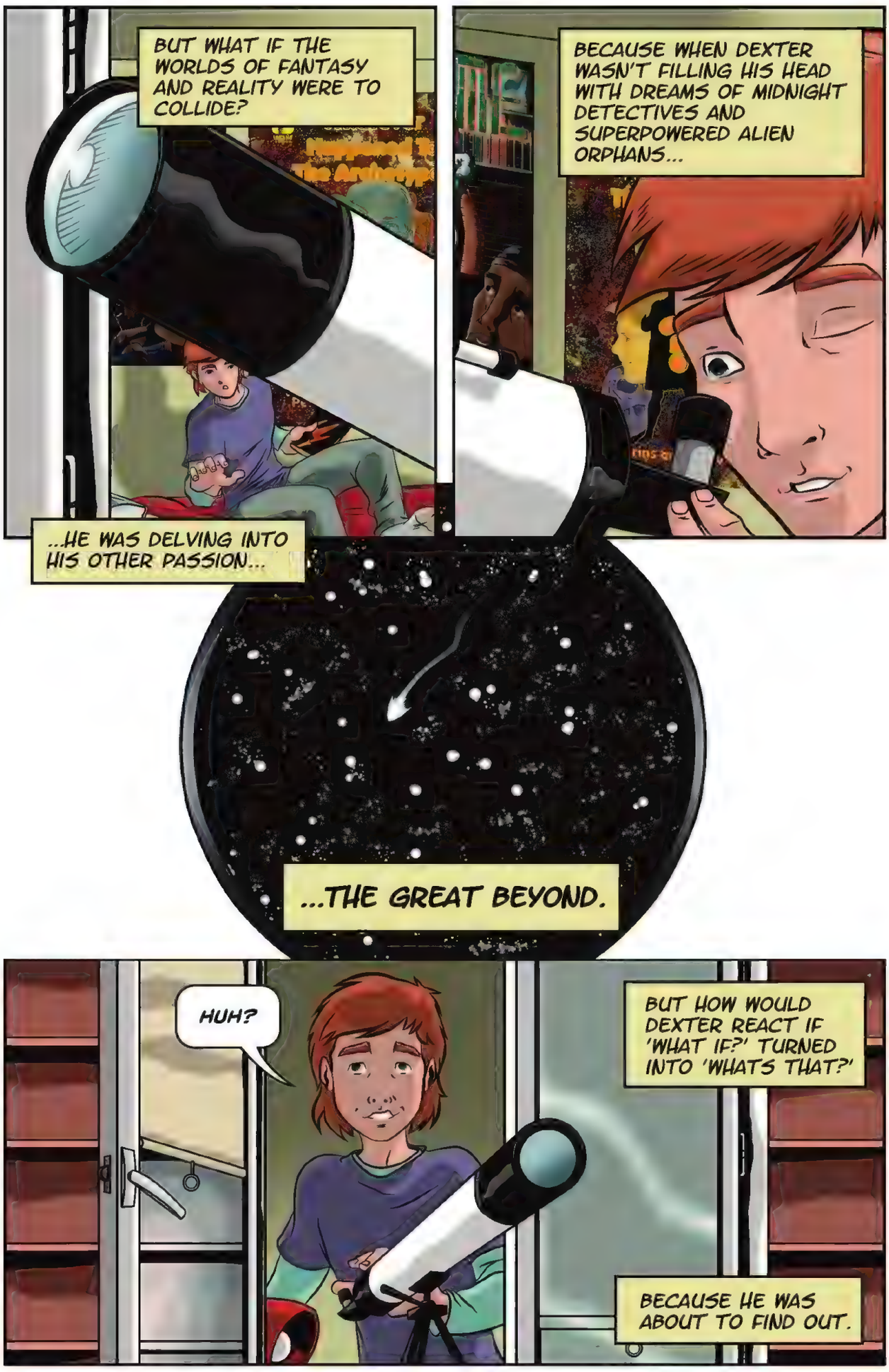
LIKE MOST BOYS HIS AGE, DEXTER HAS LITTLE TIME FOR THE 'REAL WORLD'...
...PREFERRING TO LOSE HIMSELF IN THE REALMS OF FANTASY.
WHY MUDDY THE BRAIN WITH ALGEBRA AND CLEANING YOUR BEDROOM...
SPACE TRACE
...WHEN THERE ARE FAR OFF GALAXIES AND UNKNOWN LIFE FORMS TO DISCOVER.


BUT WHAT IF THE WORLDS OF FANTASY AND REALITY WERE TO COLLIDE?
BECAUSE WHEN DEXTER WASN'T FILLING HIS HEAD WITH DREAMS OF MIDNIGHT DETECTIVES AND SUPERPOWERED ALIEN ORPHANS...
...HE WAS DELVING INTO HIS OTHER PASSION...
...THE GREAT BEYOND.
HUH?
BUT HOW WOULD DEXTER REACT IF 'WHAT IF?' TURNED INTO 'WHATS THAT?'
BECAUSE HE WAS ABOUT TO FIND OUT.

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THE SHIP WAS CIRCLING THE TWELVE RINGS OF FORTUNA X WHEN THE GAMMA COMPUTER BEGAN TO VIOLENTLY SHUDDER OUT OF CONTROL.
MEGATOMIC BATTLE RABBIT
ISSUE 1 - THE BLUE FLASHING LIGHT
WRITTEN BY STU PERRINS
ART BY ISRAEL HURETAS
LETTERED BY AARON RACKLEY
EDITED BY DAN RUSHTON

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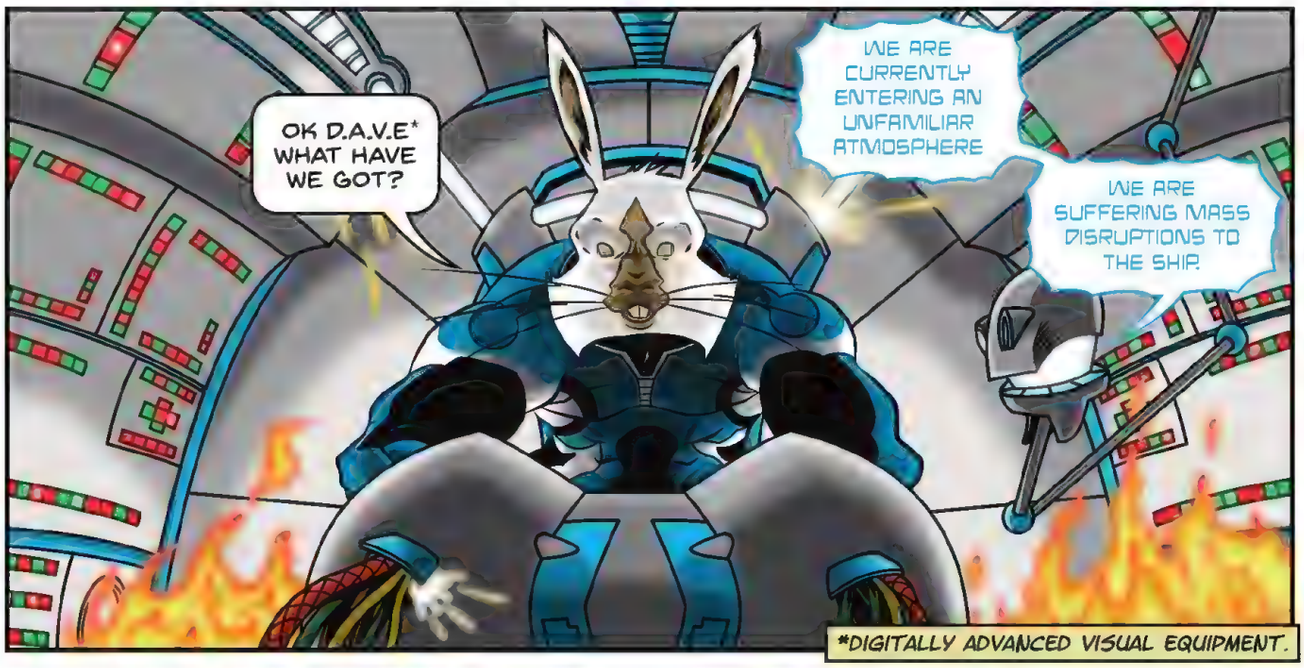
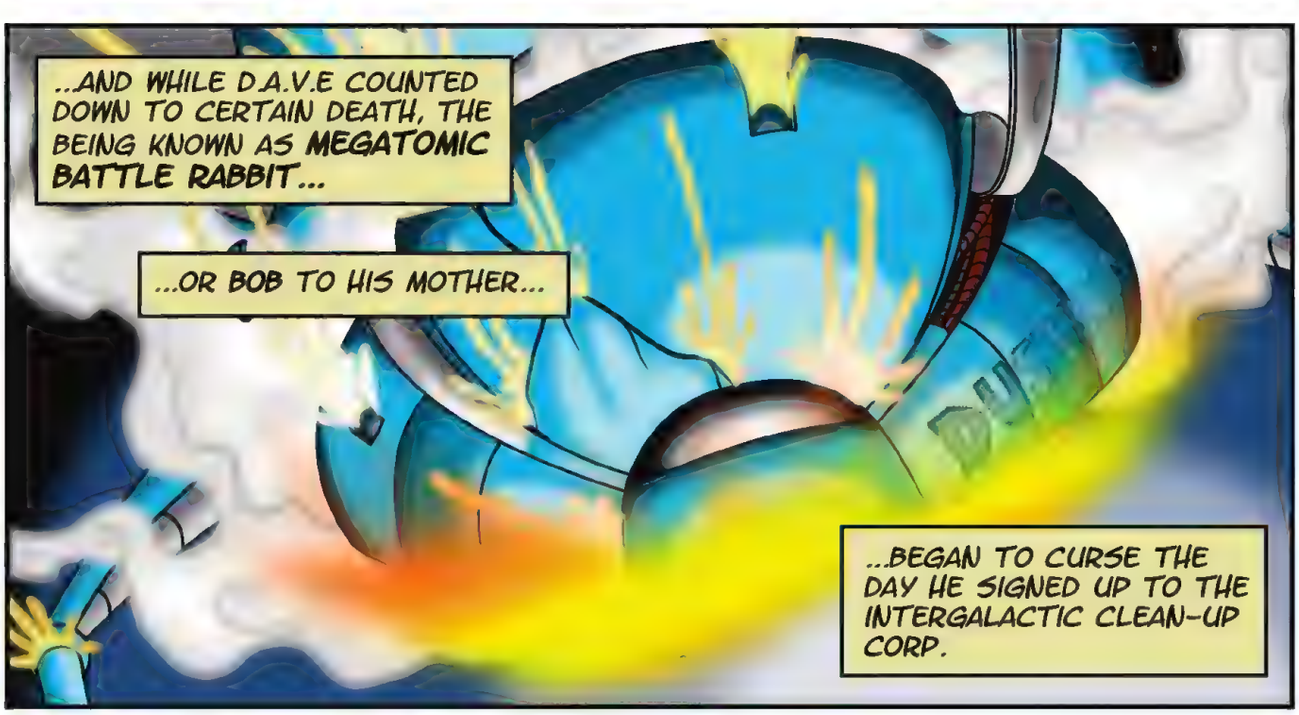
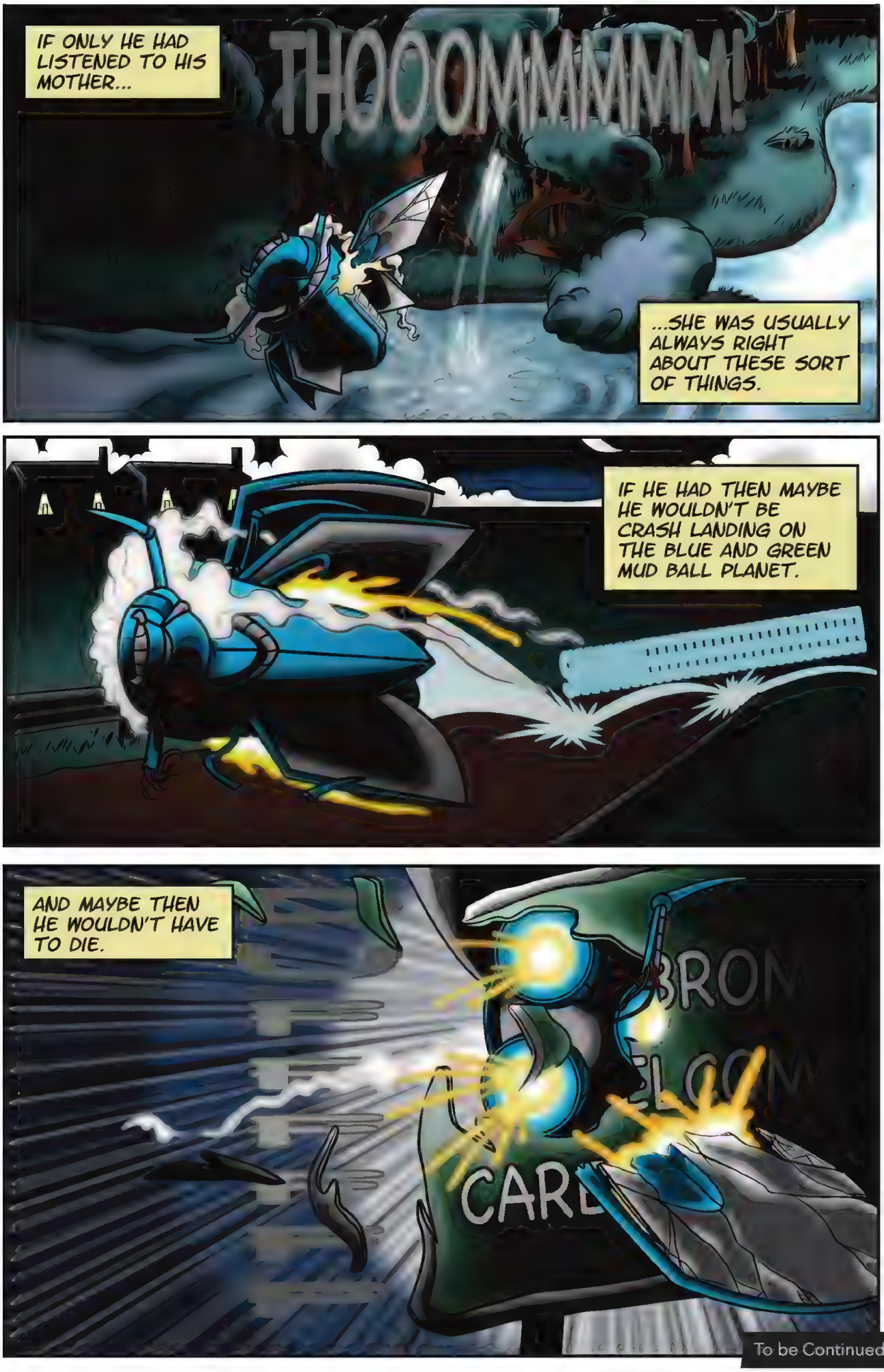
BUT IT WAS ONLY WHEN THE ASTERAL VALUE BEGAN TO DECREASE IN PRESSURE THAT HE DID WHAT ANY SANE DUSTBUG PILOT WOULD DO...
KKKKKZKZKKKZZZZZZZZZ!
..HE PRAYED TO THREE OF THE RECOMMENDED GODS...
KKKKKZKZKKKZZZZZZZZZ!
..AND PANICKED.
KKKKKZKZKKKZZZZZZZZZ!


OK D.A.V.E* WHAT HAVE WE GOT?
WE ARE CURRENTLY ENTERING AN UNFAMILIAR ATMOSPHERE
WE ARE SUFFERING MASS DISRUPTIONS TO THE SHIP.
*DIGITALLY ADVANCED VISUAL EQUIPMENT.

EMERGENCY CRASH LANDING IN TEN SECONDS...
...10...
...9...
...8...
WHAT!?


...AND WHILE D.A.V.E COUNTED DOWN TO CERTAIN DEATH, THE BEING KNOWN AS MEGATOMIC BATTLE RABBIT...
...OR BOB TO HIS MOTHER...
...BEGAN TO CURSE THE DAY HE SIGNED UP TO THE INTERGALACTIC CLEAN-UP CORP.


IF ONLY HE HAD LISTENED TO HIS MOTHER...
THOOOMMMMMM!
...SHE WAS USUALLY ALWAYS RIGHT ABOUT THESE SORT OF THINGS.
IF HE HAD THEN MAYBE HE WOULDN'T BE CRASH LANDING ON THE BLUE AND GREEN MUD BALL PLANET.
AND MAYBE THEN HE WOULDN'T HAVE TO DIE.
To be Continued...

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WHACKOMAN!

BY MARC JACKSON

CONSUMED BY SHIELA THE STEALERS' PECULIAR POCKET-BOOK, OUR HERO FINDS HIMSELF TRAPPED IN ANOTHER DIMENSION WITH HIS SIDE-KICK, BUGSY...

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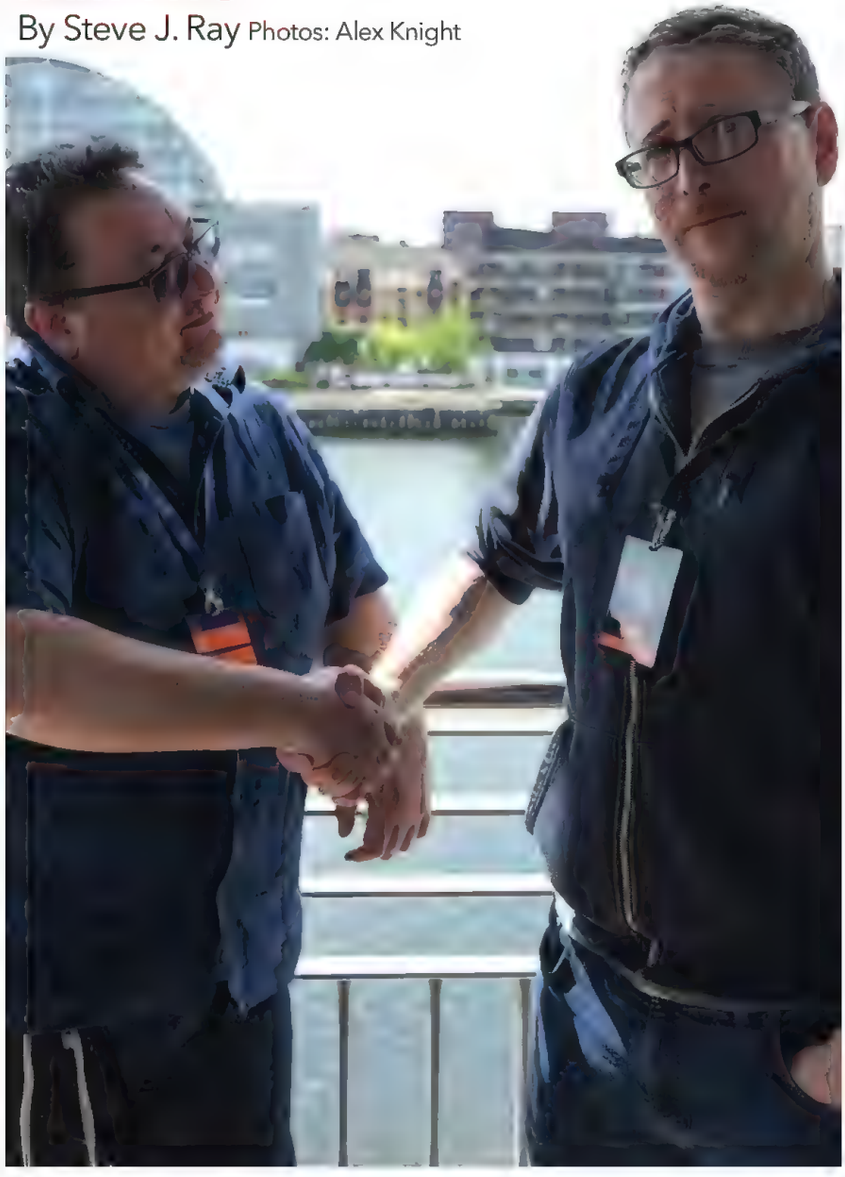
ANDY DIGGLE INTERVIEW

PART TWO

By Steve J. Ray Photos: Alex Knight



Continued from Issue 9 at the May 2019 MCM Comic-Con at London's Excel, where we sat down and talked about comics.

S: Bring back Batman: Confidential. That was a good series.

A: Thank you. I've got an idea for a Batman/Joker story that has an angle I don't think has been seen before. The main problem with these top level characters, the ones that are so iconic, over the decades it feels like everything's been done. It's hard trying to find a fresh angle on it. I don't just want to be churning out filler. I only want to approach a major character if I feel that I've got something new to say with it. I've got an angle for a Joker story that would basically be about childhood trauma. Both Bruce Wayne's, already well documented childhood trauma, but also the idea of the Joker - (laughing) and this sounds really harsh - but with the Joker traumatising children, with the potential of creating new adversaries for himself.

I pitched this to Jock a few years back, and he seemed quite keen on it. Maybe now Scott Snyder's done something a little similar, so I'll have to check it out.

S: Oh, the Batman Who Laughs and his cadre of Zombie Robins? No that's different. I think your idea is more like Joker creating himself the next Batman. That's dark! Again, I'd read the (R@P out of that too!

A: (Laughing) Thanks! I've got one or two Punisher stories in me, that I'd like to get out too. I definitely want to play Punisher as more of the bad guy than the hero, you know?

S: If we're honest, he is.

A: Exactly. I always have more fun with the characters that live in the grey areas. Though, writing Superman, that one character who is totally just the best person, was actually very stimulating and inspiring. Not just the strongest, but just the most decent. I think that sometimes I can get too cynical, and I need to bring out my inner Superman.

S: So, we know some of the big characters you've worked on, and may want to revisit. What's on your agenda right now, though? I know a little about the ComiXology

project, but what does Andy Diggle's life look like right now, in terms of writing work?

A: At the moment I'm writing Prométhée 13:13 which is co-production between ComiXology Originals and French publisher Delcourt. It's a spin-off from Christophe Bec's French graphic novel series., Prométhée, which is huge, epic, sprawling, science fiction conspiracy tale, about ancient aliens and U.F.O.s and government cover-ups. It spans dozens of characters over thousands of years... it's huge.

You can read the whole thing on ComiXology, in an English translation. It's massive, so it's not a quick sell, like most American comics are. It's a slow build. So, part of my job for this is to do like a single original graphic novel which acts like an introduction to this very complex world that Cristophe has built.

Shawn Martinbrough is drawing it, who's a good friend of mine and a consummate artist.

S: He's a great storyteller.

A: Brilliant visual storyteller. He has an innate sense of storytelling. We've spent years working together on things like Thief Of Thieves (Image Comics), he was one of the first artists to fill in for Jock on The Losers... going way back. He even did one of my issues of Shadowlands. So, yeah, we like working together and it's really exciting seeing him putting his pages together for that. We've got Jock doing the covers for it, too. Will Dennis is editing it for ComiXology, and he's the guy who put The Losers together, so, it really feels like we're getting the band back together. It's really exciting.

We're all going to get together at San Diego this summer, and we're gonna talk about it on-stage.

S: That is proper cool.

A: Yeah, we're hoping to get the first trade together for San Diego Comic-Con.

S: So it's going to be released in print form too?

A: I'm not 100% sure, but my understanding is it might? It'll certainly be available in English on ComiXology digitally, and there will be print editions in France. Whether there'll be any English print editions, well... I don't know. I'm sure eventually that'll happen, once the whole thing's done.

It'll be two French editions, two 46 page volumes. Whether that'll be collected as a single original graphic novel over here, I don't know yet. So, that's the current thing I'm doing. I really need to hurry up and get that finished.

I'm also writing a creator-owned mini-series, which is something that's very close to my heart. We're not really in a position to announce what that is yet, but the artist is already attached. We're weighing up our options as who to pitch it to, but we're just gonna go ahead and do it anyway, and then approach publishers.

I did a Vertigo crime book years ago called Rat Catcher, which was like an F.B.I. thriller, which we got the rights back to. I'm gonna turn that into a screenplay, because my agent keeps telling me that that's a movie waiting to happen. We had a very well respected screenwriter who actually adapted it on-spec, a few years back, but it was so different from the comic that we felt like he's clearly got his own story that he wants to tell... so you tell that story, and we'll tell this one. So I'm just going to adapt that one myself.

You can tell from the way I write that I like movies, and movie storytelling. It's just a question of finding the time. I'm spending a lot of time being a dad right now too, which is an important job in and of itself. Once I have more time for myself, then the Rat Catcher screenplay will be next on my list.

S: When you can, approach David Ramsey and Stephen Amell...

A: That could work!

S: Some in-roads. Do you still get that rush; when you've finished a script, when you've handed it over to penciller, inker, colorist, letterer, when you see the finished article, when you go, "Damn, that's so cool!"

A: Yes! Still. Especially when you're working with artists the calibre of Shawn Martinbrough, or Alessandro Vitti... when you get the stuff back, it's always kind of a rush. It's great! You also get that whole, "I could never do that in a million years" thing too. I wish I could draw, but I've got no talent for it whatsoever.

You're entirely in the hands of the artist, you're never really in control of anything. The writer's job is just to suggest to the artist, you're not the artist's boss. Yes, it's a collaboration, but you're in the artist's hands. You have to trust them. The secret is to always work with the people you can trust; the ones who can bring it to life and to make it better than it looked in your head. I've been very lucky to work with such great artists.

S: So, with that said, I take it you write full scripts, as opposed to the "Marvel style" of plot, art, then script later?

A: Everything I've ever done has been full-script. That's how I learned to do it. As a writer you're trying to create moments, a sense of pacing, and tone. The look in somebody's eye when they deliver a line... you need to be able to control that. You need to be able to suggest to the artist, "You want to have a little beat there, where we go in close and they deliver a particular line." That's not under control if you script after the fact.

It sort of makes sense if you're doing pulp superheroes, or a 60s kind of thing. Then, you know, sure... it makes sense. we're trying for a little more... subtlety? I know that subtlety might not be the obvious word to use when most of the stuff I write is exploding helicopters and gun-fights, (we both laugh).

S: Give them what they want, Andy.

A: I think it's partly because I'm a control freak, I'm not the kind of guy who writes, "Oh, and they fight for six pages." I want to be able to control the storytelling, moment by moment. Beat by beat. To choreograph, to have a sense of geography of a scene... especially an action scene. I wouldn't be doing my job if I just wrote "Marvel style." I feel like I wouldn't be earning my page rate.

Of course, you still need to be flexible. Like I said, you're not the artist's boss. When the finished art comes back it's never going to completely match what you had in your head. It's very important that the writer should always be able to re-write, based on what the artwork is. Good editors will let you do that, bad ones will send it straight to the letterer.

It's not even always the look in the character's eye, you may want to deliver a line differently because the acting is different to what you'd imagined. It might even be that there simply isn't enough room for the dialogue. You know that you often need dead space in a panel for conversations. So, sometimes you'll need to move things around, or change things.

It's important to always do a dialogue pass based on the finished artwork, before it goes out for lettering, otherwise it leads to all sorts of problems. I've had some nightmares. In one case the editor sent the wrong draft of a script to the artist, then got it lettered without telling us and then nothing matched. He then turned around and said, "Oh, actually the first draft was fine. I don't know why I asked you to re-write that." Yeah, the whole thing was just a car crash.

S: Wow. Not good.

A: Yeah. I learned a valuable lesson there. Always establish a rapport with the artist. Deal with them direct, do a run around the editors, just to iron out and avoid any problems beforehand. Otherwise things might be moving off without you being aware of what's going on behind the scenes, which could cause problems later. It just makes more work for everybody having to fix the mess later on. It's far better to make sure that it doesn't happen in the first place.

S: You've worked with some amazing artists. Is there a holy grail, or an artist or artists that you'd really love to work with?

A: I've worked with amazing people. Everyone I've already named, plus Leinil Yu, "Silent Dragon" that was amazing. In terms of people I haven't worked with... I'm a huge fan of Chris Sprouse. I think that he's phenomenal. He's just crisp, clear.

S: A great draftsman.

A: Yeah, and also he gives so much heart and expression to his characters. A beautiful sense of design. I would love to work with him.

S: So, I like to end as many interviews as I can with a trademark question I invented a decade or so back. Over the years you've probably been asked hundreds of questions. Is there a question you always wished that someone would ask you, but they never did? What's that question, and what's the answer. What would you like our readers, your fans to know about Andy Diggle, or what you do?

A: That is a good question! O.K. I'll turn it around slightly. There's a question that I do get asked a lot, which is, "How do I get a break into the comics industry?" The reply I always give is, "Well, you're asking the wrong question." The right question is, "How do I get better?" Once you get better, then the industry will come looking for you.

In my case it was evening classes and study. It was breaking comics apart and figuring them out. I would go through panel by panel, counting how many words were in each balloon, and how many balloons were in each panel, and how many panels were on each page... almost in a mathematical kind of way. I'd see how much visual information you could fit on a page.

A lot of people start off thinking that they have this sprawling epic that they're gonna do, and once it gets published they'll find fame and fortune. It doesn't really work that way. You've got to grind away doing a lot of little things first. They're never going to be great when you're first starting out, but you're still learning. It's like playing the guitar, you've got to keep practicing, and the more you practice the better you get. You learn by doing it.

People shouldn't worry so much about getting into the industry, they should concentrate on their craft, and keep grinding away and get better at the job.

Always focus on doing really short stories... and there're two reasons for this. One is that it's more likely to actually get drawn and published if you just do a "done in one" like twenty page one-shot, because that's achievable for a new writer or artist that maybe isn't get paid for it. You can finish it and actually have a finished product that you can have in your hand. If that's just part one of fifty, then it's probably never gonna happen.

If you're doing lots of short stories, then you get to work with lots of different artists. Twenty one-shots with twenty artists, instead of a twenty issue story with just one artist, then you're more likely to get them all finished, and you've got twenty different things that you can sell to twenty different people.

Then there's the sense of completion and satisfaction that you'd got to try lots of different styles, lots of different genres and all the rest of it.

S: Great answer! Do you have any parting thoughts, or comments?

A: Thank you for reading.

S: Thank you.

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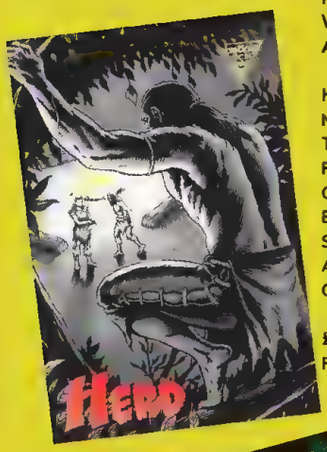

HERD #1
WRITER: GEOFF RICHARDS
ART: PETER HABJAN

HOMO-VAMPYRUS WERE THE MOST DEADLY HUMANS EVER TO EVOLVE. STRONGER AND FASTER THAN THEIR HOMINID COUSINS, THEY QUICKLY BECAME THE DOMINANT SPECIES AMONGST THE GREAT APES. HERD TELLS THE STORY OF THIS TIME

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BUT SOMETIMES LIFE DOESN'T QUITE WORK OUT HOW YOU WANT...

TO THE DEATH #6

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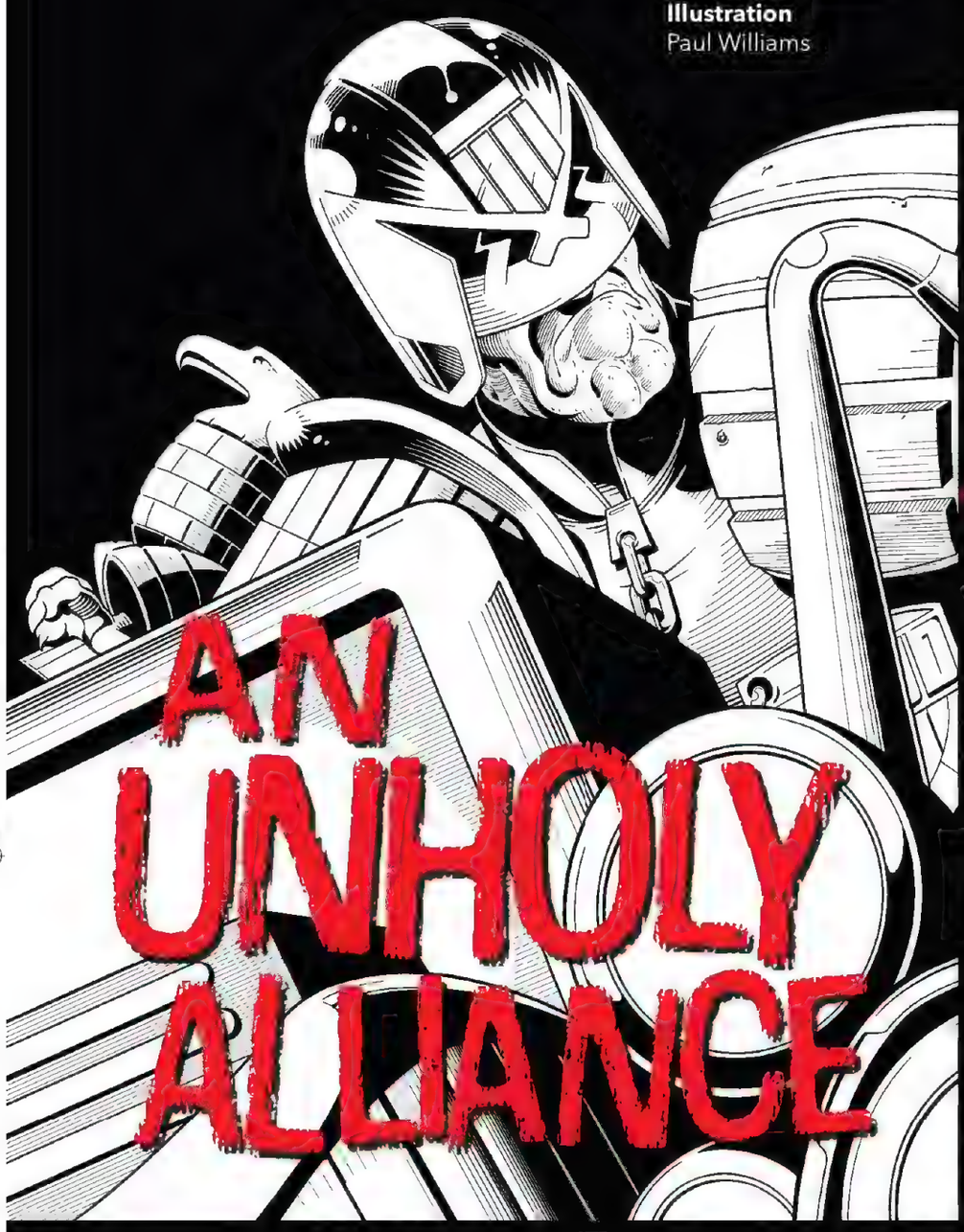
By Russ Sheath

PART TWO

Illustration
Paul Williams



AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE

INTERVIEW WITH ANTHRAX FOUNDER SCOTT IAN AND METALLICAS KIRK HAMMETT

Scott: Yeah, he was cool. Brian Bolland's artwork was incredible as were a lot of the other guys who drew it too. To me he was like a Batman who would actually kill people and took it that one step further, it was so fucking cool.

Kirk: How cool was Judge Death! I was also a big fan of Strontium Dog.

Scott: Me too. At the time we would have been on Island Records in the UK, and I can't remember who the publisher was in the 80s, but Island Records approached the publisher and said "Anthrax have this this song about Judge Dredd and they want to put the Dredd image on t-shirts." We figured they'd want a cut of the merch or we'd have to pay some kind of licensing fee, but they gave us licence to use the character gratis. They were just so excited that we wanted to use the character and promote Judge Dredd. Every couple of years we do a reissue or a new shirt with a Judge Dredd image, we had Alex Ross do a Judge Dredd painting for us, and we had to get permission and the guys who own it now just gave us the permission to use it.

Kirk: That's so great.

Kirk: I've been a science fiction fan all my life too. I saw 2001 when I was six years old. I was way too young to see a movie like that but it still made an impression on me.

Russ: Were you impacted by Planet of The Apes?

Kirk: Planet of The Apes was huge.

Scott: I was a massive fan. The original movies and the weird 70s TV series.

Russ: Was there a point for each of you where you dropped out of pop culture and left the contemporary stuff behind for a while?

Kirk: Yes. For me, because I'm OCD and ADD, I discovered this whole other world of music and became obsessed. When I started listening to music and then I got my hands on a guitar all I did, literally for the next five years, was play my guitar. I didn't make it so much to the comic book store, although I payed attention to what horror movies were coming out, but almost all my energy went into music. After I left San Francisco it really started to pick back up right when my band Exodus started to play shows and write songs, so we needed substance material and I was like ,'let's watch a bunch of horror movies'. We'd get together and watch horror movies and try to find subject matter and that basically jumpstarted me again.

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When I went out to New York, met Scott, saw The Evil Dead and especially when we started to tour, I started being able to go to all these different comic shops, toys stores, second hand shops and pawn shops on tour. The opportunity for me to get back into something I love was greater than ever and It allowed me to become a better collector and keeper of all this stuff and I couldn't turn it down. It was always there, but when music came into my life, this stuff crept back in.

Scott: I didn't drop off until some point until the early 90s. I was still collecting comics, had my Stephen King collection and was into movies, but when my personal life went into an upheaval thats when I stated drinking, as a 30 year old (laughs). I discovered this whole other world that most people experience in their teens and in their 20s. I got to my 30s and spent 7, 8, 9 years raging and getting that out of my system.

Kirk: With me (laughs)!

Scott: With comic books and geek culture I certainly fell off in the early 90s, until the internet. I think I got my first laptop around 1999 and when the internet came around and I had all this stuff at my fingertips, I probably got more into all kinds of comic culture, sci-fi and horror, more than I ever was.

Russ: What pop culture stuff do you enjoy today. Are you reading current comics?

Kirk: There's this one comic called Providence, which is amazing. It's by the Watchmen guy...

Scott: Alan Moore.

Kirk: Alan Moore! They've done this comic and it's about this journalist and he's investigating all these Lovecraftian things that are going on around Providence, Rhode Island. The art is mind-blowing and it references all these different Lovecraft stories and then goes into a bigger stories and takes it to some other place. We all know how great of a storyteller Alan Moore is and for me this is the best thing he has ever done, and I'm a big Alan Moore fan. It's my favourite comic of the last few years, definitely.

Scott: I'm definitely going to check out Providence now, it sounds amazing.

Kirk: It's so good.

Scott: I'm not reading any comics currently but just way into movies and serialised television, there's so many shows and I just finished Legion season 2, I love that show. Besides Stephen King, Joe Hill and stuff like that, there is this author David Mitchell that I got turned onto in the last few years. He wrote The Bone Clocks and Cloud Atlas and it's sci-fi but it's like sci-fi that I've never experienced before, it's so unbelievably smart that this guy can't be human the way he puts words together. I'm like "How is it possible that he knows how to write this?" It blows my fucking mind.

Kirk: One of the best horror movies I've seen all year was on Netflix and it was a movie called The Ritual, check that out, it's epic! The whole concept is really original and different. When you see it you'll go "Ok, alright" there are images in there that seem familiar, but the whole story is so great and original.

Russ: Because you guys are so well known, does that prevent you from doing things like going to conventions such as San Diego? Do you feel you are missing out on that part of being fans of pop culture?

Scott: You just wear a mask.

Kirk: The thing about San Diego is that it's so big and so decentralised now. I remember in the 70s San Diego Comic-Con was in the Hyatt or something and was in one room. The only reason I knew about San Diego Comic-Con was when I used to go to comic book stores and be interested in back issues, the dealer would say "You've got to buy it now otherwise I'm taking it down to San Diego," like it was a threat. Now it's so huge it's almost taking over San Diego.

The other thing about it that blows me away is there's females there. It used to be a sausage fest, nerds upon nerds all nerding out. When I went about ten years ago my jaw dropped and females weren't just there in attendance but were there dressing up and buying comics, it was all going in the proper direction.

I also thought, wrongly, that my comic collection would be obsolete by the turn of the century and I made the mistake of starting to get rid of some of my comics. I couldn't have been more wrong as right now Marvel rules modern pop culture and the biggest movies are Marvel movies. I kick myself for not waiting it out to see what would happen. I had Spider-Man issue 1 and all these silver age comics, but I thought they would become a thing of the past and I got rid of most of them, like 90% of them. I really regret that.

Scott: Last time I was in San Diego I wore a Gene Simmons mask and walked the floor (laughs). I loved it.

Kirk: It's just so big these days. You have this section in the middle of the aisle where you have maybe vintage comics or original art, but there's so much movie stuff, props and collectibles, it's massive. It's a good thing and I love and I support it, but it's so overwhelming.

Russ: So there's no chance we'll see you guys open a comic book store together? Have you ever been to Kevin Smith's comic book store in New Jersey, the one featured on the 'Comic Book Men' show? It's part museum to Kevin's movies but it's also a regular comic book store, with all the books and merchandise you might find elsewhere.

Scott: I have not. I've heard about it.

Kirk: Wait, wait, wait....while we are on the subject of Kevin Smith, has anyone seen that fucked up movie he made called Tusk?

Scott: I haven't.

Kirk: Oh my god, you've got to see that movie, it's out of control. He turns a guy into a walrus.

Scott: I gotta see that.

Kirk: It's worth the watch. I remember seeing Kevin at Comic-Con a few years ago and I said to him, "Thats one fucked up movie you made"! He took that as a very big compliment. Check that one out.

Russ: Did you see the one after, Yoga Hosers? There was two young girls and a sausage that came alive wearing a World War 1 German Soldier helmet. It's pretty surreal.

Scott: He used Anthrax in that movie. He's an old school metal dude.

Kirk: Here we go...Yoga Hosers! I'm buying it right now (laughs).

Scott Ian's autobiography 'I'm The Man' is available from booksellers. Follow Scott on twitter @scott_ian

Kirk Hammett's book 'Too Much Horror Business' is available from booksellers. Follow Kirk on twitter @kirkhammett

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WHAT'S THIS?! A BRAND NEW MENACE THAT JUST COULDN'T WAIT FOR ISSUE 3, THAT'S WHAT!! STAND FIRM, DEAR READER AND WITNESS THE GALACTIC GUARDIANS FACE THEIR MOST DANGEROUS ADVERSARY YET IN...
DANGER ON DEVRON VII
GREAT GALAXIES! SOMETHING'S TAKEN OVER THE PEOPLE OF THIS PLANET! AND NOW...
...IT'S GOT KID COSMIC
WONDERFUL WORDS BY: ANDY W. CLIFT
POPPING PENCILS BY: ANDY W. CLIFT
INCREDIBLE INKS BY: HAVE A GUESS
CRACKING COLOURS BY: THIS IS GETTING SILLY
1

DEVRON VII
A HUMAN COLONY ON THE FURTHEST EDGE OF COMMONWEALTH SPACE.
ALL COMMUNICATION HAS BEEN CUT OFF BY THE INHABITANTS.
THE GALACTIC GUARDIANS KNOWN AS CAPTAIN COSMIC AND KID COSMIC, HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED TO INVESTIGATE.
LITTLE DO THEY KNOW OF THE DANGER THAT AWAITS!
WOW. WHAT STUNNING ARCHITECTURE.
INDEED. THE DEVRON PEOPLE HAVE DONE WONDERS IN THE SHORT TIME THAT THEY HAVE BEEN HERE.
2

INITIATING SCAN. HMM, I'M NOT PICKING UP ANY SIGNALS OF ANY KIND.
THAT'S STRANGE, THIS IS A BUSTLING SOCIETY. WHERE IS EVERYONE?
HOLD ON, I'M GETTING SOMETHING. MULTIPLE LIFE SIGNS.
WHERE?
RIGHT THERE!
EXCUSE ME, SIR?
HELLO...
3

...SIR?
HOLY MOLY!!
WHAT IS THIS? LET ME GO!
GRAB!
IT'S ON ME!
URGHH...NO!!
4

KID!
KID COSMIC, ARE YOU OK? TALK TO ME.
BY THE STARS?!! WHAT IS THAT?!
RWARRRR!!!
To be Continued...

THE STATE OF INDEPENDENTS

The UK's independent and small press comics scene has never been more exciting. We bring you a look at some of the best!

"The second issue is where you make your great idea meaningful"

Alex Thomas looks at what's next after a great debut...

Last month we looked at the secret to writing a great first issue of a comic. However writing a follow up is almost as difficult. So here's what we look for in second, third and fourth issues...

1. Know where your story is heading
While the first issue is all about introducing your great idea to the world, the second issue is where you make it into something more meaningful. This is why you need to know where your story is heading. If it's a multi-issue epic then you should already be looking at the big picture. But if you are looking at a much shorter run then structure your story to fit the number of issues you can realistically complete in order to finish your story properly and in a reasonable time.

2. Expand your world
While the first issue may be all about introducing your heroes and heroines, the following issues are all about expanding the characters you have - and potentially introducing more. Rather than cram everything into the debut hold some characters for issue #2 or make sure to add depth to those you introduced in issue #1.

These great second issues help to develop their stories in exciting new directions

3. Make it accessible to all
The great man Stan Lee once said every comic should be written for someone who is reading it for the first time. While this definitely held true for the mass market days of the early 60s, this is still vital. After all, every reader needs to start somewhere. Making it so that a new reader needs to read pages of back story just to catch up will be intimidating and put them off even starting. This is where structuring your story can help. Build mini arcs or tell self contained stories to help readers get into your books more easily. Also consider recap and intro pages for in depth storylines.

4. Consistency is key
While you may have poured every ounce of blood sweat and tears into your debut, you are going to have to do the same for future issues, or else readers will feel short changed. Keep writing and production values at a constant level, and try to retain the same creative team in order to give a sense of continuity. If you can't keep the band together then make that part of the series unique features.

5. Keep them coming back for more
This is as much of a logistical point as it is a creative one. While we are used to the Big Two releasing books every month, in small press things can be a lot slower. Make sure you set your schedule to be manageable and keep your time between issues to a reasonable gap. You can't leave that cliffhanger dangling forever!

Produced in association with Pipedream Comics
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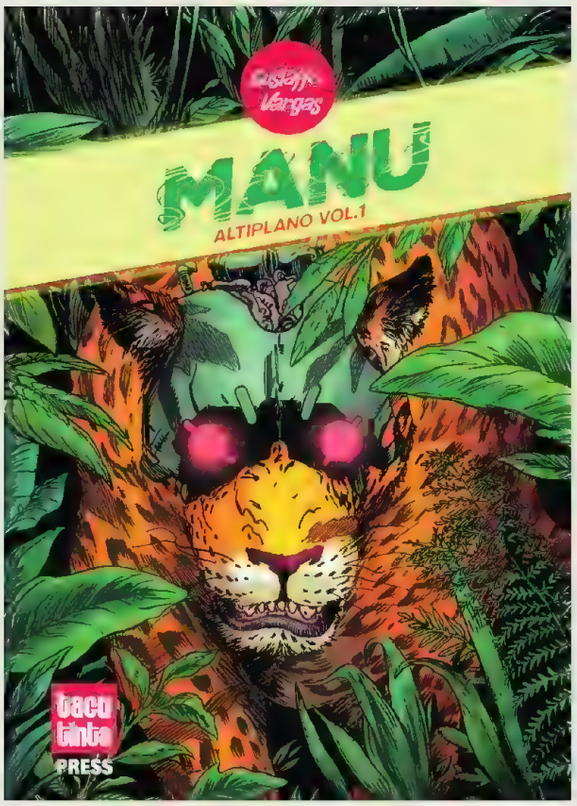
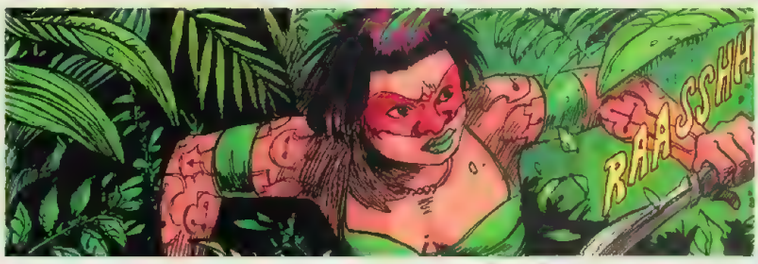
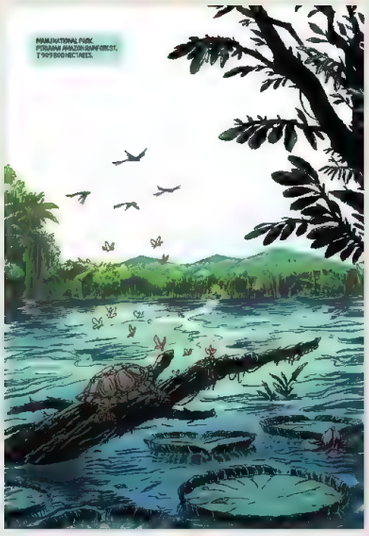






MANU Altiplano Vol. 1

Publisher: Tacu Tinta Press
Writer/Artist: Gustaffo Vargas
Price: £5 at gustaffovargas.bigcartel.com

Gustaffo Vargas burst on to the small press scene in 2018 with the dazzlingly unique Peruvian sci-fi comics Trujillo and L1MA. Their mix of sleazy South American criminals and spectacular neon-infused Incan visuals, made them some of the most memorable books we read all year. Now Gustaffo is back, with a full length story from his sci-fi jungle world, but will his unique style be sustainable across a longer story?

MANU begins in the Amazonian jungle where a young woman in Incan face paint is being pursued by a cybernetic jaguar. It perfectly sets the tone for the world we are entering, with it's mix of the old natural world order and a new high-tech one, which collide in an instant. It also gives us a hint of the kind of frenetic and visually unique style of comic we have ahead.

The woman being pursued is Sonia, who is on the way to see her lover Canella, and fortunately for her, the jaguar is just a pet. Canella is your classic loner in hiding, and when a team of mercenaries interrupt her and Sonia's quality time we begin to wonder what she is hiding from, especially when the couple head to the city.

While the story of MANU is relatively straight forward, it is well told and certainly more ambitious and expansive than TRUJILLO and L1MA – both of which suffered from trying to tell too ambitious a story in a condensed space. Here the story has plenty of room to breathe and the characters are allowed time to develop.

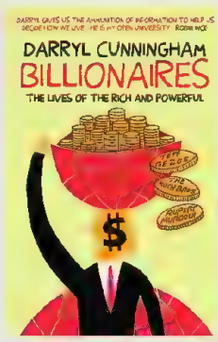
"It brings a unique angle to dystopian cyberpunk comics, by setting it in an Amazonian jungle"

We often talk about the importance of originality in small press, and this book has it by the bucket load. Just as Vault Comics' These Savage Shores turned a vampire story into something unique by setting it in India, Vargas brings a completely new angle to the world of dystopian cyberpunk comics, by setting it in the South American jungle. With a mix of traditional clothing, contrasting with high-tech creatures, and lush tree-scapes, Vargas's line-work feels like something from the Prog. While some pages can be a bit rough, each page has a raw energy that enables you to forgive any minor discrepancies, and they are all rendered with some sublime colouring that make it really pop and make it feel completely original.

With books like MANU as well as this year's Boy Abducted by Aliens Returns, Gustaffo is really creating a names for himself as one of small press' most interesting creators. This is the perfect calling card for him, as well as an ideal jumping on point for new fans.

Billionaires

Publisher: Myriad International
Writer/Artist: Darryl Cunningham
Price: £16.99 from Amazon



As comics fans we're used to the concept of global mega corporations ruling the world, but these are usually seen in dystopian sci-fi thrillers.

Darryl Cunningham's Billionaires features many of those themes, but it is all based in reality as he profiles 4 of the world's richest and most powerful men - News International's Rupert Murdoch, Amazon's Jeff Bezos and US energy magnates the Koch Brothers.

Cunningham's meticulously researched book deals in facts rather than hyperbole, laying out each man's journey to the top of the rich list, and picks up on the common themes that allowed all four to succeed. Whether that is gender, ethnicity, inherited wealth or a willingness to embrace new markets, and exploit old ones to suit their needs. It's a fascinating look at these powerful men and the influence which they have on our daily lives and also on the governments they seek to control.

Cunningham uses a very simple, almost impressionistic art style which uses a minimum of lines and fuss to illustrate his story. With a strict panel structure and smart use of a limited colour palette it feels more like a newspaper cartoon than a comic, and in a lot of ways the images are there to visually compliment the text rather than lead the narrative which better suits the message he is trying to tell.

Fascinating and frightening in equal measures, if this were a work of fiction you would struggle to believe it.

MULP: Sceptre of the Sun

Publisher: Improper Books
Writer: Matt Gibbs
Artist: Sara Dunkerton
Price: £2.49 at Comixology

This new issue of Matt Gibbs and Sara Dunkerton's glorious mouse based pulp adventure serial is bitter sweet. On one hand it is a new chapter of this wondrous series that sees a group of archaeological rodents attempting to recover a lost artefact. But on the other, this final issue means the end for this truly unique series.

Across it's 5 issue run MULP has been a consistent delight. It's wonderful concept has felt like Indiana Jones meets Bramley Hedge, yet it has avoided being just another cute animal book by layering the story with a quaint charm and a really well constructed adventure serial tone that sees the mice live in a world where humans no longer exist, giving it a really unique and intriguing culture.

Dunkerton's gorgeous painted artwork has been a revelation. It makes every panel feel like something from a classic children's book rather than a comic. She has coped effortlessly with whatever concept Gibbs has thrown at her, from giant bird-like creatures to Incan temples and much more besides. The characters are wonderfully cute and expressive, but also incredibly well studied and their mix of human and animal anatomy is faultless.

With an ending which leaves the door open for more, we are keeping our paws firmly crossed as MULP has been one of the most glorious adventures in small press comics!

The Tower in the Sea

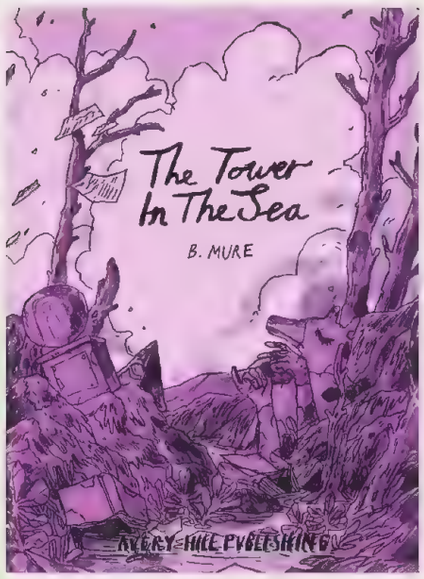
Publisher: Avery Hill Publishing
Writer/Artist: B. Mure
Price: £8.99 from averyhillpublishing.bigcartel.com/

The latest chapter from B. Mure's Ismyre series is another sublime slice of whimsical, magical fantasy.

This chapter follows Miriam a young orphan who is sent to divination school at an early age. While there she attempts to find meaning for her apocalyptic dreams, but is this a premonition or something more?

With its magical school theme, the Tower in the Sea has an obvious Harry Potter feel to it, but it's a long way from being a knock off of the boy wizard. Packed full of wonderfully esoteric characters, from the shy and unassuming Miriam to her clueless owl buddy Efrim, through to intimidating teacher Madame Cornelia, it's a story that is powered forward by it's wonderful characters.

Visually the story looks incredible again with B's watercolour wash style giving every page this multi coloured textured beauty to it. With so much depth and detail lurking behind these glorious pages, The Tower In The Sea feels like the most polished and accomplished chapter of the Ismyre series so far.



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"I think on a surface level it's easier to resonate emotionally to artwork"

Rees Finlay turns his adult autism diagnosis into **Reaffirmation**

Chronicling the diagnosis of his autism in adult life, Rees Finlay's latest book Reaffirmation is a thoughtful and highly emotive look at a very personal issue. We caught up with Rees to find out more about why he chose to tell his story in this way, and the unique format he has used.

Rees uses visual metaphors to explain the various stages of his autism diagnosis

What inspired you to turn this complex and emotional event into a comic?
Rees Finlay: Processing my feelings through comics is becoming a running theme for me now, having done an autobio comic about the moral villainy of working for a payday loan company a few years back. But one year ago I was diagnosed as autistic at the age of 25. Left feeling confused, alone and helpless I turned to my local bookstore. And upon seeing 80% of the autism book section dedicated to children and their parents, I was inspired to join that 20% and contribute my voice.

The book mixes comics and prose, why did you choose that format?
RF: It started as just a collection of short skits and adventures that eventually tie together at the end to show the bigger picture of my journey. But as we know, autism is so broad and complicated, it began to necessitate articles and deeper explorations to clarify and expand on my points. From there it grew into a book where the emotional core is held mostly in the comic pages, with the research and learning part of my journey being expressed through articles, anecdotes and rants within the prose sections.

Why do you think comics lend themselves so well to mental health?
RF: I think on a surface level it's easier to resonate emotionally to artwork, so even if the comics are just stick figures, the drawing of a sad face immediately makes the reader understand the emotional resonance. Also there's the factor that the books are often autobiographical or their foundations are built upon real-life experiences, and the readers find themselves caring for that character a lot more than your Bruces (Banner, Wayne…..Forsyth?) The stakes are higher, you're rooting a lot more for them and you want to see them conquer the demons.

Has writing this book helped you to understand autism better and give your life a renewed direction?
RF: Absolutely. Not only did I make the book that I was desperately needing at the time (so now I can read it, others can too if they like) But through my reading and research I found a new home in the autism community, learning about neurodiversity and discovering the dark and scary history of society's understanding of our condition.

And as my knowledge and understanding grows, I continue to become more aware of myself and how my autism affects me, and allow me to grow in a positive direction.

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Rok the God

Publisher: RedRok Comics
Writer: John Wagner, Alan Grant
Artist: Dan Cornwell (Art), Abby Bulmer (Colours), Jim Campbell

Rok the God continues the story of Rok of the Reds, an alien lord who forsakes his destiny on his home world and hides on earth as a talented if precocious footballer.

After the fitting finale of that first series, Rok's idealistic new life as a hometown hero hits an unexpected obstacle when his Uncle arrives to inform him that he must return home to reclaim his place on the throne.

Writers, Wagner and Grant have produced a really entertaining story with Rok the God which has a very witty, quintessentially British feeling to it. As you would expect from these two legends, it feels like 2000AD crossed with Roy of the Rovers and finds a neat middle ground between these two very different worlds.

Artist Dan Cornwell (who was a revelation on the first series) returns and his work manages to expertly keep up with the more sci-fi based settings that Wagner and Grant have given him.

If the series continues in this winning way then it looks set to be another championship season for Rok!

Snow White Zombie Apocalypse

Publisher: Scout Comics
Writer: Brenton Lengel
Artist: Hyeondo Park
Price: TBC from Scout Comics

Based on the title and cover of Snow White Zombie Apocalypse, we were expecting a fairly generic zombie fairytale. But instead we got a really original post-modern mash up of undead monsters and fairytale characters that fizzes with attitude!

Snow White Zombie Apocalypse (SWZA) starts with a twist on the Red Riding Hood story which sees our heroine attacked by an undead Big Bad Wolf. A charming prince is soon on the scene, yet in a smart subversion, it is not him, but a plucky female fighter who delivers the killing blow. Our heroine, Rapunzel, is anything but your trad Disney princess and instead has the fighting skills of Katnis Everdeen and the sassy attitude of Harley Quinn.

The remainder of this first issue sees our heroes encounter other fairytale folk with increasingly gruesome outcomes and delivers a fantastic mix of blood and guts, but with some sparkling dialogue and really engaging and sassy characters.

Writer Lengel uses his fantastically fun characters to power this book along, while the artwork from Hyeondo Park reminded us of J Scott Campbell, but with more blood and less posing!

It's more than just a gore book, as the mix of sparkling dialogue, and smart in jokes that poke fun at fairy-tales and zombie clichés alike make this a great read. Whether it is Rapunzel berating Charming for kissing any inanimate girl in the woods (aka Snow White), or Snow White having been asleep for 28 Days, Lengel manages to make this into much more than just another wannabe Marvel Zombies, or Walking Dead parody.

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"I thought exorcising things that I was thinking about might mean I'd clear up some head-space"

Lizzy Stewart on why she needed to create **Walking Distance**

Illustrator and children's book author Lizzy Stewart returns to her comic roots, with Walking Distance, a highly personal look at modern womanhood and women who walk in movies. Told using a unique mix of dense blocks of text and beautiful images we were keen to find out more about how this wonderful book came into being.

Walking Distance starts with a look at Lizzy's love of women walking in movies

Can you tell us a bit about your process for writing Walking Distance?
Lizzy Stewart: I make notes a lot, I'm always trying to pin down the thread of an idea before it gets away so that was, probably the start of it. I had some time at the end of 2018 and I hadn't done any personal work for a while so I knew I wanted to make something but I was struggling to know what that might be. I think the book came out of that struggle. I thought that, perhaps, exorcising the things that I was thinking about constantly might mean I'd clear up some head-space for better ideas in the future!

I don't think I ever thought of it as being a comic. The drawings were a necessity. I find it hard to think of myself as a writer so I tend to come at everything with pictures. It makes the process less daunting!

Your mix of long chunks of text next to pictures is more like a picture book, was that an intentional style choice?
LS: The way that the book works was unavoidable, I think. It was always going to be illustrated yet also text heavy. There are so many things at play in my life that made that decision for me, it was unconscious but inevitable! Primarily I'm a picture book author and illustrator so I think a lot in big images and text chunks.

We love your children's books, why did you feel the need to write something so personal?
LS: To be honest I was struggling to write a new picture book when I wrote this book. I really believe in fiction as a way of explaining the world to children but at the moment The World is a quite a difficult place to explain! I felt like my own brain was getting in the way of the stories I wanted to write, telling me that an idea wasn't useful enough 'in the current climate'. It was quite paralysing. I felt like I had to deal with my own thoughts before I tried to talk to anyone else, especially a child. I'm not sure if it worked, I'm still a bit stuck to be honest!

The pages about your love for women walking in movies is a great hook, have you discovered any more favourites?
LS: I'm hoping that I'm in for many months of film recommendations from readers! Its been a pretty ropey year for new films! There's a film called 'Good Posture' out soon that looks like it might fit my exact requirements though.

You can purchase Walking Distance for £10.99 from the Avery Hill Store

Captain Cosmic

Publisher: Frontier Comics
Writer/Artist: Andy W. Clift
Price: TBC from frontiercomics.bigcartel.com/

If you've been following the adventures of Andy W Clift's intergalactic hero and his plucky sidekick in the pages of ComicScene then you'll know it's a glorious slice of throw back pulp sci-fi. However, what you've read is only the beginning.

While the first issue of CC was Clift's love letter to the silver age, the subsequent issues have built on that passion to create one of the most glorious small press series around. Each issue has developed subtly, giving the series more depth and detail as Clift has channelled classic Dr Who in issue #2, and now 1960s Batman in #3. Introducing us to the sinister Phantom Spaceman, a villain who only appears every 5 years, Clift gives the series a truly enigmatic villain with as poignant past, and gives us the kind of recurring nemesis that can really make this series click.

Clift's artwork continues to be out of this world as well, and manages to make Captain Cosmic into more than just a homage to those halcyon days, but ultimately a book which feels like it could have felt quite at home on the news-stands of a 50s diner!

Money Shot

Publisher: Vault Comics
Writer: Sarah Beattie, Tim Seely
Artist: Rebekah Isaacs
Price: £2.49 from ComiXology

Writing a good adult-oriented sex comedy is no easy task. For every Sex Criminals or Oh Joy Sex Toy, there are a dozen sophomoric sleaze fests which feel like the comic book equivalent of Porkies 2.

Attempting to join this rarefied genre is Money Shot, the latest from the fine folks at Vault Comics. A group of scientists who are struggling to finance their experiments decide to pool their resources and make money by having sex with aliens and broadcast it to a world which has become jaded and cynical by online porn.

Fortunately the emphasis in Money Shot is more on the struggling scientists than the interspecies intercourse and so what could have been a horribly misguided series of alien sex jokes and creepy images, end up being a lot of fun. The characters are well rounded and plausible and there is a strong emphasis on humour and genuine humanity rather than setting out to shock and outrage.

The visuals also help give the book a professional edge, with a J Scott Campbell-esque style featuring clean lines, strong colours and very expressive faces. As well as some fantastically designed aliens.

Inevitably with the kind of concept that this book is built around it isn't going to appeal to everyone. It is definitely for mature audiences with it's strong language, mild nudity and adult themes, yet it feels much more like an R Rated Kevin Smith movie, rather than some sub par erotica. As such is well worth a look if you are something which is a bit more outrageous and adult orientated than your usual reads.

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SMALL PRESS SPOTLIGHT

We look at 3 books being released at Thought Bubble 2019

Mike Sambrook and Rosie Packwood's **The Incredible Bun** sees a giant rabbit heading to the city and becoming embroiled in the animal fighting world. After an excellent opening chapter this second issue is much more event focused as we start with a training montage (which is told brilliantly across a double page spread), before Bun is pitted against the powerful Vex - a fox like creature with a hidden secret. Bun then gets dragged further into the sleazy under belly of his manager's world and from that point on he must decide where his priorities lie.

With the characters firmly in place, Sambrook and Packwood are able to really make the most of building a story about the big fight atmosphere. However this is much more than just Rocky with rabbits, they also manage to give the story a real heart and depth to it, despite Bun being completely mute.

Alongside the cutesy animals and over the top action there is also a dark heart to it, which gives it the kind of edge and depth that the animated Watership Down had (and also inspired so many childhood nightmares). While it is not as dark as some of Madius' books, it manages to tread a delicate line between cutesy and edgy which stops it from being too schmaltzy and goofy, but stops short of going too full on and graphic at the same time.

Packwood's artwork feels much more confident this issue. You get the feeling that she really knows the world that Bun is set in now and it means the comic is much stronger as a result. The colours especially are out of this world, giving it a slightly vintage feel to it, which goes well with the purple and orange theme which seems to permeate throughout the book.

With a final twist which hints at a new direction for upcoming issues Sambrook and Packwood have taken what could have been a really cheesy giant bunny story and turned into something really top class. **Purchase The Incredible Bun #2 from www.madiuscomics.co.uk**

Matt Garvey continues his one man mission to bombard us with every conceivable kind of comic, and this month he has a crack at all ages horror with **Camp Bleh!** A homage to classic slasher movies, as well as creepy ghost stories, Camp Bleh sees a group of kids on a summer camp sat around a camp fire telling a creepy story. But in the woods there is an actual bogeyman coming to get them. However as the story evolves, so too does the monster in the woods. It's a really smart balance of knowing horror references (Dracula, Wolf Man, Friday 13th etc.) but without going too overboard and scary at the same time. There is enough detail for older kids to get something out of, but it is also tame enough that it could be read by the right younger reader as well (Parental discretion being advised for really young readers). This kid friendly horror is helped by some fun and colourful artwork from Rosie Hague. She gives the characters a cartoonish feel which felt a bit like Hamish Steele's work, while also giving the monsters a really smart, albeit very conventional and classic look - and without too much gore or scariness as well. While it's perhaps a little bit light on content for adults, for kids this is not bogged down by being too clever or too knowing and is all the better for it. **Pick up Camp Bleh from mattgarvey.bigcartel.com/**

Mat Greaves' caffeine addicted, sleep-deprived journo **Chip McFitz** is back in **Joint Fever.** After seeing a public information film on the dangers of marijuana he heads undercover to investigate the lure of the demon weed and sees himself embark on a tripped out journey around the LA jazz clubs and the city's seedy underbelly.

Greaves does a fantastic job of parodying those 50s drug films that were designed to scare the youth 'straight'. It mixes in nicely with the pulp noir stylings of the previous McFitz books that feels like something from a vintage paperback - but with the surreal humour of an Adult Swim animation. It's like a mix of Fritz the Cat, Cheech and Chong and Adventure Time. Greaves animation inspired style gives the characters a unique but very expressive appearance and he mixes that in with some awesome psychedelic visuals, as well as a flashback to Chips time in the army, as McFitz becomes hooked on the demon weed. All of which makes for another addictive read! **Pick up Chip McFitz from gumroad.com/**

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Sequential Empathy

The Unflinching yet Sensitive Flourishing of Mental Health in Indie Comics: Part 1

Dear reader, this article comes to you much later, and longer, than intended. When I began piecing together a general overview of mental health's depiction in independent and small press comics, I didn't guess it would blossom into what's before you now. I like to think the rising number of comics I've covered and creators I've interviewed as I worked on this piece reflects the amount of talent out there making great strides in providing us with empathetic, truthful illustrations of what it's like to live with a mental health condition.

The profile of mental health is on a considerable rise, for better and for worse. Bryan Cranston has encouraged us to peel away at the orange. Universities across the U.K. have been urged to increase support for young people with mental health problems. A recent edition of Channel 4's Dispatches series uncovered the severe pressure that mental health services are under in helping those affected by a condition. Reflecting that rise in mental health awareness in our society is an increase of independent comics that choose to utilise mental health as the soil in which to grow their stories and characters from.

Although mental illness can take many forms, anxiety and depression are the most familiar illnesses that appear in sequential form. Whether that's a reflection of just how many people endure anxiety and depression, or whether more comic creators happen to live with those precise mental health issues is up for debate. From self-published zines to ongoing single issues, web comics and Kickstarter campaigns for anthologies, creators are rapidly flooding the independent scene with comics that aim to increase alertness of mental health, both educating and emphasising the reader into a better understanding of coping with day-to-day tasks with a mental illness, through realism, humour or metaphors. "I think art has that power that not much else does in this world," says Roddy McCance, writer and editor behind Fracture Press' Tales of the Fractured Mind, an anthology that encompasses seven strips based on seven separate mental illnesses. "You can read about mental health, but you don't necessarily read about the emotions or see the people behind the descriptions or news items."

Taking Roddy's reasoning for creating his anthology a step further, despite the aforementioned diversity in medium of mental health's portrayal throughout indie comics, many are united in their themes by placing their own creators as the main characters. That grounded sense of reality makes their empathetic stories resonate deeper with the reader, and the comic in question a more authoritative affair.

Standing in your Humour

Numerous indie comics that tackle mental health bear an intense flavour due to their autobiographical nature. Rachael Smith's Wired Up Wrong, Emily B. Owen's Brain Shoodles and Dani Abraham's Worry Wart make no qualms about their protagonists having anxiety and depression, neither do they shy away from the fact that the protagonists are in fact the creators themselves.

Wired Up Wrong, Brain Shoodles and Worry Wart are intimate, funny and heart-breaking. Throughout each publication, Rachael, Emily and Dani give intricate, precise details about how the daily activates of their lives are thrown off balance by their mental health conditions. Much like the content of these comics, their genesis were muted, solitary affairs. "I started making auto-bio comics again for my Patreon supporters," explains Rachael. "I noticed that the ones that dealt with my struggles with anxiety and depression tended to be the more popular ones, so I decided to make a whole book of them." A reflection perhaps, then, of audience's desire to see more mental health presentations in media? The success Rachael's found with both this and its follow-up, Stand In Your Power, would suggest so.

Wired Up Wrong boasts a warm, compact sort of friendliness to it. Its breezy, light-hearted, comical reflection of Rachael's own day-to-day doings is underpinned by its deeper application of anxiety and depressions' effects on the daily tasks we may take for granted. Each of Wired Up Wrong's strips builds towards some manner of punchline from Rachael's humorous interpretation of her life. Rachael illustrates herself, her friends and family in a bright, accessibly vibrant manner, almost like a newspaper strip. There's a delightfully innocent vibe to Wired Up Wrong's visuals and sitcom-esque situations of Rachael gently poking fun

at her own dealings with anxiety and depression.

That sense of humour ripples gently across these comics. Rachael illustrates most of Wired Up Wrong in a four-panel structure, whilst in Brain Shoodles, Emily draws herself as a dumpling-like caricature. The aforementioned sense of realism in these comics' autobiographical format is at odds with their lacing of caricatured humour. "I guess making jokes about it is one of my coping mechanisms," explains Rachael. "I also wanted the book to be warm and humorous rather than just bleak." Emily's zine is another comic that balances the grim with the hilarity. Her illustrations share the same minimalist, uncluttered style of Wired Up Wrong. The 'Shoodles' in the comic's title is a fusion of Emily's own creation; shit doodles, a bleakly hilarious reflection of the comic's DIY nature. Illustrating herself like she does, yet also presented in stark black-and-white, Brain Shoodles feels like a very literal handling of the funny and the sad.

DIY Doodles

Emily guides us through her daily routines, breaking the fourth wall further than Wired Up Wrong. That sense of interactivity from Brain Shoodles highlights the zine's immensely personal mechanics, as if Emily is speaking directly to you. Much like Wired Up Wrong, Emily finds the best way to display her struggles with mental health in the mundane and intimate moments of her life. Brain Shoodles may not have begun life as a comic, yet its straight-forward nature highlights its determined attitude, as if it's on a mission to depict a sincere reflection of how anxiety and depression can affect those who may seemingly have a positive life, including Emily's. "The hard bit was ignoring the internal voices which tell you you're not good enough, that no-one will read it, that you're embarrassing. Those voices tend to be the ones that shout the loudest and the ones that we most easily believe are telling us the truth."

By comparison, Worry Wart sheds the humour almost completely, and expands on the more explicit scenes of

Wired Up Wrong and Brain Shoodles. Dani's own comic, initially a web comic but now also a print edition, explains the extreme physical effects anxiety has on her. What initially begins as nervous tummy expands into panic attacks, diarrhoea and avoidance of food itself. Dani eloquently explains and shows her severe symptoms with a firm, fearless clarity. Her unfolding journey in discovering what's wrong with her and how she bears with these

> "WHAT UNITES THESE COMICS IS A BRAVERY TO DEPICT THE FALLOUT OF ANXIETY + DEPRESSION"

symptoms make for brutal yet honest reading. Sharing the visually stripped back manner of Rachael and Emily's work, Worry Wart presents itself with bare backgrounds, emphasising Worry Wart's focus on Dani and her self-exploratory nature of her anxiety.

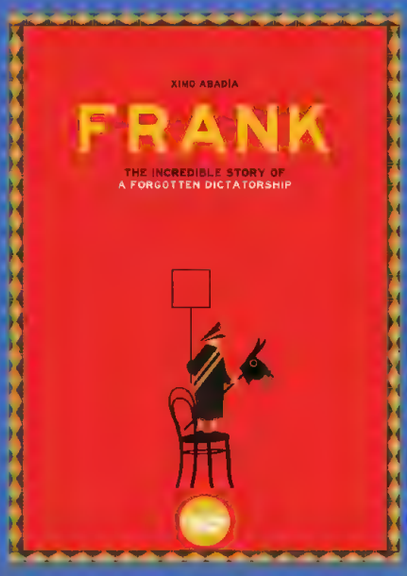
Worry Wart finds some positivity however, as Dani finds stability in her condition through medicine, yoga and self-care, the last of which is a message shared between these three comics. Worry Wart, Brain Shoodles and Wired Up Wrong don't end on a triumphant note, indeed there's a sense that they don't really 'end' at all. Rather, they acknowledge that having anxiety and depression is a road that's not easily prepared at all, and to savour the moments in which yourself or a loved one can provide comfort. "Although these are very much all my experiences I would never have put the comic together if other people hadn't told me that they related to them too," says Emily, emphasising the sense of empathy scattered amidst these diverse titles. "Every page in the comic is something I have been through and the thought of helping even one person feel less alone was a driving force in getting it out there even if I was feeling like the biggest imposter in the world." A tangible feeling of connecting to the reader is cemented in these comics, born out of a form of illness that's stigmatised by its abstract nature, an illness which some who don't understand it think we should just stop feeling like. As we'll explore later, Rachael Rowan Olive's wonderfully sweary zine A is for Awkward pokes the perfect sort of hole in this logic with a particu ar page of herself being asked a question interminably asked far too often by those with mental health illnesses: 'Have you tried… Just… Not hating yourself?'

Warts and all

What unites these comics is a boldness, a bravery to depict the fallout of anxiety and depression in a caricatured state, as if to soften the blow for the reader. Brain Shoodles comes from the word shit. Dani depicts herself on the bog. Rachael recounts bouts self-harm. "Some of it came very naturally and some was very cathartic," says Rachael. "I found the story about my experiences in secondary school really difficult to write about as it's something I've spent most of my life trying not to think about. I think it did me good to get it all down on paper though."

EURO-SCENE

EUROPEAN COMIC REVIEWS



Title: Frank
Script and Artwork: Ximo Abadía
Publisher: Europe Comics
Price: £14.99

Frank is a short and scathing critique of Franco's dictatorship in Spain, the way people dealt with it after he had finally fallen and how the current generations are obliged to deal with it following the failures of their forefathers to do so.

It is written by Alicante native Ximo Abadía, who has had previous success with Centuria (its volumes 1 & 2 were nominated for Best New Author at the Barcelona FAN and La Rioja comic festivals).

His comic Frank is extremely brief and starts with Franco's childhood in northern Spain. It follows his trajectory from small town boy to military general to [illegible] dictator.

It is very colourful, principally using red, blue and yellow as its base palette but mixing well to create a vibrant comic. Happens very Picasso like with all its straight lines and shapes but this is also used by Abadía to serve as metaphorical representations of the dictatorship.

The comic is so brief that it succeeds in also explaining how ridiculous the whole situation in Spain had become. It is a must read for anyone interested in the modern history of Spain.

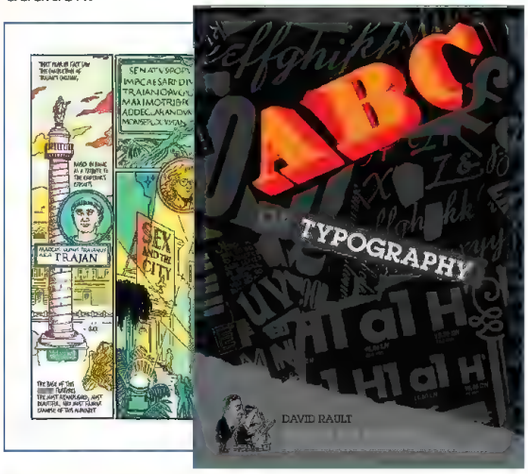
Title: ABC of Typography
Script: David Rault
Artwork: Various
Publisher: Self Made Hero
Price: £14.99

David Rault enlisted the help of 12 illustrators, artists and graphic designers to bring us his ABC of Typography - a potted history of typography. He takes you on a journey through its development from its early beginnings in Mesopotamia to its situation in the present day.

Each chapter is devoted to a different period of typography's evolution and is drawn by a different artist. This history's presentation in comic format is particularly poignant given the mediums particular influence on typography, and its prevalent use in comics generally.

Rault goes into fantastic detail and his collaborators illuminate it with a lovely variation of comic arts styles and colouring. Rault clearly sees typography as an art form itself - perhaps the 10th art - and he does an excellent job of making you agree with him.

The historical sector of continental comics continues to grow to its ever-growing repertoire. ABC of Typography is another informative and interesting addition.



Author: Thomas Sargeant | **Twitter:** @nouscrombobinons

Title: Colored
Script: Émilie Plateau (Based on the book "Colored: The Unsung Life of Claudette Colvin by Tania de Montagine)
Artwork: Émilie Plateau
Publisher: Europe Comics
Price: €7.49

Colored is the eye-opening biography of equality activist Claudette Colvin. 15-year old Colvin was arrested on her way home from school on 2nd March 1955. She was on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama, and refused to give up her seat for a white person.

Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a bus in the same city on 1st December 1955. Colvin was a pioneer. A pioneer who never received the recognition she deserved for her courage, bravery and influence on one of the greatest civil rights movements the world has ever seen.

Émilie Plateau, a French comic artist based in Brussels, does a wonderful job of trying to right this wrong, taking her script from Tania de Montaigne's chronicle of Colvin's life.

Plateau limits the colouring in this book, no doubt deliberately, to brown, black and white. There are no panels but the pages are set into panel like forms making it flow nicely.

She manages to include enough information and history on the Civil Rights Movement to give the reader ample insight into the wider significance of Colvin's tale.

To same extent, her drawings are simple but extremely effective. The details give you an idea of what life in Montgomery looked like but no so many that you are distracted from the main event.

Colored is a must read and hopefully will help contribute to giving Colvin the recognition she deserves.

Title: Mikel
Author: Mark Bellido
Artwork: Judith Vanistendael
Publisher: Self Made Hero
Price: £24.99

Mikel is the story of Mark Bellido's foray into the world of being a bodyguard. Bellido was a bodyguard for potential targets of the Basque separatist movement ETA in the Basque Country for four years.

Originally from Seville, Bellido upped sticks and moved north from his small provincial home to Pamplona where he took on the task of being a bodyguard for a local mayor.

We begin getting to know Mikel through his work. Prior to becoming a txakurra (dog, pejoratively speaking, in Basque) he was a wannabee writer and confectionary salesman.

Despite his ambitions of being a writer, Mikel always finds a distraction or simply suffers from writers block. After watching a news bulletin about an ETA attack on Badajoz airport Mikel finally finds the source of his brilliant idea for a book.

Bellido's intriguing and emotional story is beautifully illustrated by Belgian comics author and artist, Judith Vanistendael.

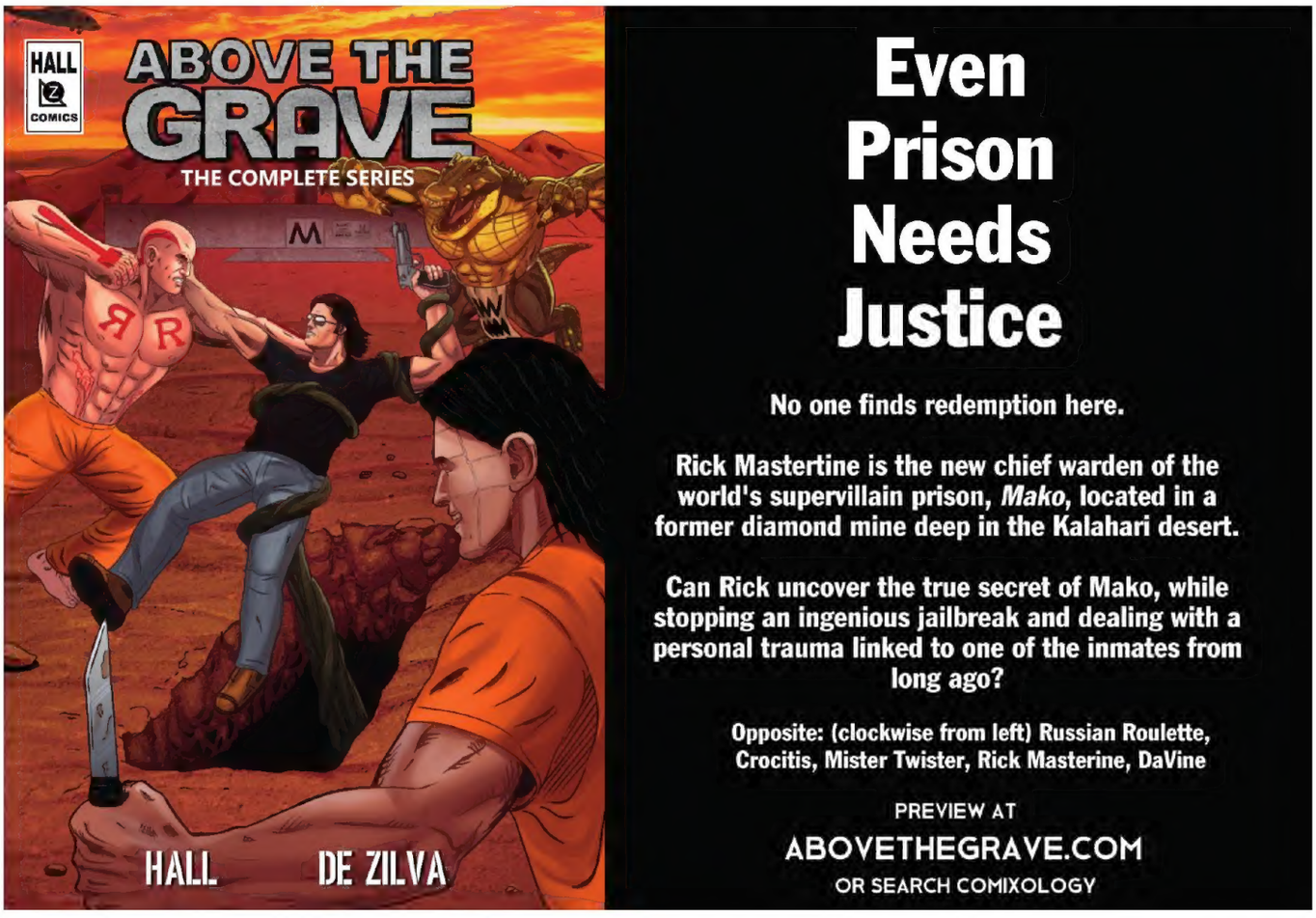
Her previous successes, also published by SelfMadeHero, include When David Lost His Voice (Eisner Award nomination) and Dance by the Light of the Moon, which was nominated for the Angoulême Grand Prize twice.

To Mikel she brings a mixture of drawing techniques and fantastic colour schemes. She captures the sights and landscapes of the Basque Country magnificently.

The dream pages, which frequently feature, were compiled using a risograpgh with the assistance of Axel Claes. Vanistendael mixes huge double page spreads with standard panel schemas and the story is fluid thanks to the thoughtful layout.

Mikel doesn't take you to the heart of the Basque conflict, nor does it give an in depth look at its history and contemporary situation. However, it does give you a window into part of it through an accidental participant.

These windows are somewhat underrated and Mark Bellido's personal experience is a fascinating drama that keeps you guessing until the end.


HALL
COMICS
ABOVE THE GRAVE
THE COMPLETE SERIES
HALL
DE ZILVA
Even Prison Needs Justice
No one finds redemption here.
Rick Mastertine is the new chief warden of the world's supervillain prison, Mako, located in a former diamond mine deep in the Kalahari desert.
Can Rick uncover the true secret of Mako, while stopping an ingenious jailbreak and dealing with a personal trauma linked to one of the inmates from long ago?
Opposite: (clockwise from left) Russian Roulette, Crocitis, Mister Twister, Rick Masterine, DaVine
PREVIEW AT
ABOVETHEGRAVE.COM
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TIGER...

CELEBRATING 65 YEARS OF PUBLISHING

By former editor **Barrie Tomlinson**

Editor Barrie shows Malcolm Macdonald some good bits in a copy of Tiger

Lots has been written, in 2019, about the 65th anniversary of Roy of the Rovers. It's been partly overlooked that Roy's adventures first appeared in issue one of Tiger comic. Therefore, Tiger also celebrated its 65th birthday in 2019.

Tiger was launched on September 11th, 1954 by Fleetway Publications. Tiger's first editor was Derek Birnage. On the cover he announced that Tiger, which cost three old pence, was "The Sport and Adventure Picture Story Weekly".

I became a sub editor on Tiger in the early sixties. By that time David Gregory was the Tiger editor and the title was still featuring sport and adventure, with such stories as Olac the Gladiator, strongman Typhoon Tracy and space adventurer Jet-Ace Logan.

When, in 1969, I was lucky enough to become Tiger editor I decided that Tiger should become an all sports title. Sport was very popular with children and I felt it was the right time to make such a change. From then on, all the stories were based on sport.

The move to an all sports comic proved to be popular with readers and I decided to add sporting features to the line-up. I introduced the Tiger Sports Star of the Year competition, in which Tiger readers could vote for their favourite sports star.

I was quite surprised when the first winner was tennis star Ann Jones. I'd been expecting a footballer to win the title. It was shrewd judgement by Tiger readers, for Ann Jones deserved to be the winner.

The second winner of the award was England goalie Gordon Banks, a World Cup winner in 1966 and a worthy winner of the sports star of the year title in 1971. I had a special box made for the shining Tiger trophy and made the journey to Stoke, where I presented it to Gordon in the middle of the Stoke City pitch (not on a match day!).

After I'd handed over the trophy, I had a long conversation with Gordon and I asked him if he wrote for any publications or was under contract to write for anyone. To my surprise he said he didn't have any deals at all and right away I said "How about writing for Tiger?" Gordon said he would love to and on the train back to London I could hardly stop smiling. I'd signed the World's top goalkeeper to write for Tiger.

I then had to work out how Tiger could afford to pay for the articles. I calculated that if I dropped a two-page picture strip the editorial budget would just about balance out.

How did the readers react to the appearance of the weekly articles? They loved the idea and Gordon's feature 'From the Goal-line' was a winner.

All the Tiger editors in one photo. Left to right: David Derek Birnage (1st), Paul Gettens (4th)

One amusing incident when I was in Stoke with Gordon: He was about to drive me to his home and as I got into the front passenger seat of his car I was carrying the wooden box containing the Tiger trophy. "Put it on the back seat," said Gordon.

I swung the box over the rear of my seat and as I did so it struck Gordon on the arm. For a moment, I glimpsed a terrible headline: 'Tiger Editor injures world's best goalkeeper!'. But I needn't have worried. Gordon received no serious injury!

Tiger's reputation became so good that over the years I was able to sign lots of big name sports stars to write for Tiger. Tiger's football writers included Trevor Francis, Mick Channon, Jack Charlton and Malcolm Macdonald.

Cricketers who wrote for Tiger were Geoffrey Boycott, Tony Greig, Ian Botham, David Gower and umpire Dickie Bird.

Not bad line-ups for a children's comic!

It was amazing that Tiger's reputation was such that I only had to ask the stars to sign for the publication and they agreed. No-one ever said no!

From the world of show business, Ernie Wise wrote articles for Tiger, while Eric Morecambe wrote for Roy of the Rovers, which I'd launched as a separate title. Paul Daniels also contributed to Tiger.

What about the picture-strips in Tiger? It was a powerful line-up of stories, thanks to some stories Tiger inherited at various mergers. Let's take a look at some all-time favourite strips:

Billy's Boots, the story of the schoolboy who could only play well when he was wearing a pair of old football boots which once belonged to old time footballer Dead-Shot Keen. (Script Fred Baker, art Mike Western and John Gillatt).

Slogger from Down Under (Cricket), Golden Boy (Athletics), Nipper (Football), Topps on Two Wheels (Motor cycle stunt rider).

Those stories and features all helped make Tiger something special in the world of comics. Tiger's reputation was a powerful weapon. As I've recounted before in my book 'Comic Book Hero', Tiger's reputation came in very useful when I was trying to get into Lord's Cricket Ground on a non-match

: David Gregory (2nd), Barrie Tomlinson (3rd),

Jackie Stewart checks out Tiger after winning the Tiger Sports Star of the Year competition.

Cricketers Bob Willis and Geoffrey Boycott enjoy some Christmas presents, including copies of Tiger!

Skid Solo, the formula one driver who became a world champion. (Script Fred Baker, art John Vernon).

Hot-Shot Hamish, the Scottish football giant whose shots could break the back of the net. (Script Fred Baker, art Julio Schiaffino).

Johnny Cougar, the native American wrestling hero. (Script Tom Tully and me. Art John Gillatt and Sandy James).

Death Wish, the story of the masked man who would try any sport, as long as it was dangerous. (Script me, art Vano).

Roy of the Rovers, the world's most famous soccer story (Script Frank Pepper, Tom Tully, art Joe Colquhoun, Paul Trevillion, Fred Holmes, Yvonne Hutton, David Sque and Michael White).

Martin's Marvellous Mini, two lads who owned a yellow mini and raced with it. (Script Fred Baker, art David Sque).

Other stories included The Tough Game (Rugby), Tallon of the Track (Speedway), The day. I had a meeting organised with Geoffrey Boycott but the man on the gate refused to let me in, when I said I was from IPC Magazines. The massive publishing house made no impression on him. After waiting a while, I mentioned I was from Tiger. "Tiger? Why didn't you say so! Come on in!"

That's what Tiger meant to people!

Tiger was the first comic I edited and always my favourite. In recent years, I've been contacted by many former Tiger readers and it seems Tiger was as special for them as it was for me. Over the years, from 1954 to 1985, Tiger entertained millions of readers. This was thanks to all the editors, editorial staff, writers, artists, letterers and photographers, as well as the most important ingredient of all … the readers!

Author: Barrie Tomlinson | **Twitter:** @BarrieEditor1

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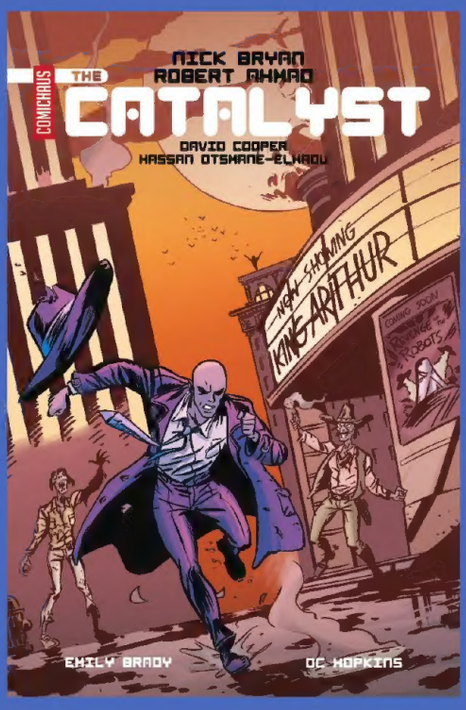

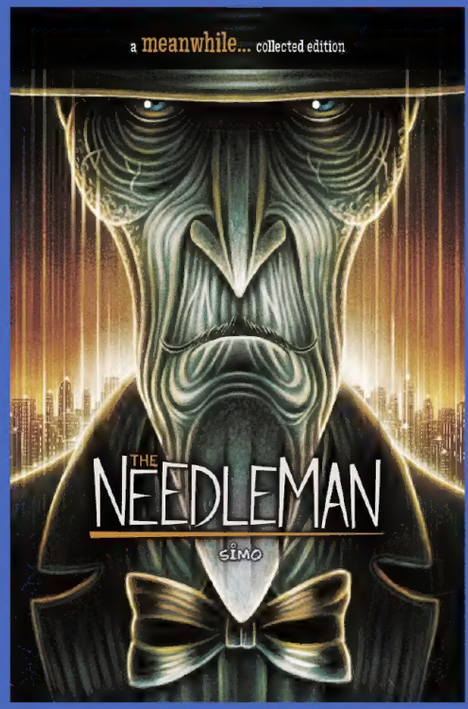

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